

# THE SCORE

A MUSIC MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

Number 6, May 1952

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Five Shillings

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COVER: Facsimile of the opening bars of *Die Jakobsleiter*, in Schönberg's manuscript.

IN THE NEXT ISSUE WE HOPE TO INCLUDE:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <i>W. H. Mellers:</i> | <i>John Bull and English Keyboard Music (I)</i>                            |
| <i>Wynne Godley:</i>  | <i>Is musical criticism a valid subject?</i>                               |
| <i>André Mangeot:</i> | <i>The Madrigals and Requiem Mass of Joan Brudieu</i>                      |
| <i>William Glock:</i> | <i>Some Problems of Interpretation</i>                                     |
| <i>Iain Hamilton:</i> | <i>Hindemith's Piano Music</i>   |
| <i>T. W. Adorno:</i>  | <i>Extracts from essay on Schönberg in Die Philosophie der neuen Musik</i> |

*Also reviews of the Paris May Festival, the ISCM Festival and the Maggio Musicale (Florence).*



We are pleased to consider publishing new compositions which may be submitted to this magazine. The length of such compositions should not exceed eight pages.



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## CONTENTS

### *Comment*

Roger Sessions:	Some Notes on Schönberg and the 'Method of Composing with Twelve Tones'
Virgil Thomson:	Reflections
Frank Martin:	Schönberg and Ourselves
Pierre Boulez:	Schönberg is Dead
Roberto Gerhard:	Tonality in Twelve-Tone Music
Fred. Goldbeck:	The Strange Case of Schönberg
Karl Rankl:	Arnold Schönberg
Ralph Kirkpatrick:	Domenico Scarlatti's Harmony (II)
Edward J. Dent:	Edmund Horace Fellowes
Herbert Murrill:	'The Rake's Progress'
Peter Gelhorn and Anthony Milner:	'Billy Budd'

Number 6, May 1952

Schönberg's Letter to the American Academy of Arts  
and Letters, who awarded him \$1000 (1947)

That you should regard all I have tried to do in the last fifty years as an achievement strikes me as in some respects an overestimate. My own feeling was that I had fallen into an ocean of boiling water; and, as I couldn't swim and knew no other way out, I struggled with my arms and legs as best I could. I don't know what saved me, or why I wasn't drowned or boiled alive—perhaps my only merit was that I never gave in. Whether my movements were economical or completely senseless, whether they helped or hindered my survival, there was no-one willing to help me, and there were plenty who would gladly have seen me go under. I don't think it was envy—what was there to envy?—and I doubt whether it was lack of goodwill, or worse, positive ill-will on their part. Perhaps they just wanted to get rid of the nightmare, the agonizing disharmony, the unintelligible thinking, the systematic lunacy that I represented, and I must admit that those who thought in that way were not bad men—though, of course, I could never understand what I had done to them to make them so malicious, so indignant, so violent and so aggressive. I am still certain that I never took anything from them which was theirs. I never interfered with their rights and privileges, and never trespassed on their preserves. I didn't even know where these lay, or what was the line of demarcation that marked off their estate, or who gave them the right to ownership of the property. I am proud to accept this distinction, awarded on the assumption that I achieved something. Please don't call it false modesty if I say that perhaps something was achieved, but that it is not I who deserves the credit. The credit must go to my opponents. It was they who really helped me.



## COMMENT

Many composers and critics are coming to the conclusion expressed by Herbert Murrill in this issue, that 'creative thought in music may now be clearly presented with no more than two main roads to the future.' We are beginning to see that it is Schönberg and Stravinsky, above all others, who have defined the crisis of contemporary music and of the contemporary spirit without fear or compromise.<sup>1</sup>

Musicians will differ in their choice between the two great masters. But whichever we prefer, and this will be partly a question of temperament as well as of principle, we can hardly fail to observe that the twelve-tone method is the only international practice in present-day music; and therefore that it is likely to play some part in the future. On the other hand, while composers will doubtless continue to take many tonal inventions from Stravinsky, I think they are less likely to follow his æsthetic. He is an isolated genius.

We all know the commonest objections to twelve-tone music. First, that it sounds unnatural to the ear; and the answer is probably: the ear must educate itself. Secondly, 'twelve-tone music takes as its norm the well-tempered scale, which is artificial and man-made'. This, of course, presupposes that there is a scale given us by nature. In the 19th century, 'music' meant music based upon the tonal scales and tonal laws of construction which had developed through the centuries; and these scales and systems were undoubtedly believed to be as natural as the laws of physics. But did they belong to nature or to history? The fact remains that we cannot construct a complete major scale on a scientific or natural basis; one interval will always have to be false. It may sound right, but as soon as this becomes the basis for scale construction we must argue differently. There is no scientific acoustical proof that the scale used by the twelve-tone composers is wrong or unnatural. And these composers are at perfect liberty to say that such criticism is merely reactionary, or the argument of uneducated ears against educated.

A third, and different, objection is that as we no longer believe in the absolute character of the pre-Schönbergian system—and Schönberg himself helped to destroy this belief for us—we no longer need to be in revolt. We can now benefit from the total experience of the past, including Schönberg. Perhaps the answer to this is that the time has not yet come to settle down. There are indeed many young composers who adopt the attitude that after half a century of excess we should now return to normal. But the crucial question is surely with what resources, and with what knowledge and experience of the great contemporary upheaval is this return

<sup>1</sup> What this meant for Schönberg may be seen in the wonderful letter printed on the opposite page. It is quoted from H. H. Stuckenschmidt's *Arnold Schönberg* (1951), and translated from the German.



to be made? Would not the resources and the experience be inadequate? We must at least know the works of Schönberg and Stravinsky thoroughly, and not write music of such empty innocence that it might have been composed had these two never lived.

Then the objection of 'intellectuality'. Was there ever a musician who believed in inspiration more than Schönberg? Did he not say that he had to be inspired even to write an exercise? Yet he composed elaborate canons for his friends' birthdays; and indeed he was a man who could think naturally in terms of six figures instead of one, and who, instead of playing chess with sixty-four squares and thirty-two pieces, added an admiral, a bishop and two pawns to each side, so that there were forty pieces and a hundred squares. He tells us himself of his compositions that he could use the most complicated techniques with ease and spontaneity; and that he never committed to paper any music which had not passed through every fibre of his body. It is difficult for most of us to believe that a discipline so demanding as that of the twelve-tone method can allow any freedom of invention comparable with that of a Bach or a Mozart. Yet there are many moments in Schönberg, such as the opening of the *Menuetto* in the *Suite*, op. 25, when the twelve-tone series is apparently transfixed by some magic. As we listen to these opening bars we cannot imagine that the series took any part in the music except to find itself embedded there. T. W. Adorno warns us not to think of the twelve-tone method as a technique; rather we should compare it with the arrangement of colours on a painter's palette. When this choice has been made, the composition begins. Or is it already completed? For most of us do not feel the music to be developing before our eyes, but rather that it revolves endlessly upon itself, that every detail has been pre-ordained. Is this the meaning of the 'countless contrapuntal exercises' Schönberg is said to have worked before beginning each new piece of music? And can a constellation newly invented for each piece ever take the place of a general principle such as tonality, a principle within which every great composer could create in a spirit of subjective freedom? In twelve-tone music, as Adorno says, everything and nothing is variation; melodic detail is determined by the construction as a whole, and does not in the least affect this construction, as the slightest tremor could do in the music of Mozart or Beethoven.

Unless we are complacent, however, we shall not allow these criticisms any permanency; we shall not forget that there may be musicians of the younger generation who have already begun to enrich and modify the early procedures and to absorb the twelve-tone method into a freer style of composition, so that we shall have to listen and to criticize differently.

At present a familiar, and opposite, danger with Schönberg's music is that we may become fascinated with the density and refinement of its relationships, whereas such relationships may be no guarantee whatever of a unity *experienced* by the composer. How can we judge this, without acquiring some practice in listening to twelve-tone music? Few of us are even moderately practised in it, few can answer even the simplest questions in terms parallel to those we might use in describing our understanding of the Viennese classics. For example, are we, in any particular



passage, affected by a quicker or slower rotation of the twelve-tone series as by greater or lesser tension? Are we conscious, where the series and the theme coincide—as often in Schönberg—of a constrictingly small choice of notes towards the end of the theme, and finally of no choice at all? Can we describe the artistic satisfaction we derive from a pattern such as that at the beginning of the Fourth string quartet, where each three notes of the melody are accompanied by the other nine of the series, deployed in three chords whose spacing always varies? Or are the nature and possibilities of the twelve-tone method so ingrained in us that we are prepared, with Pierre Boulez, to condemn this passage as a reversion to melody with accompaniment within ‘the first genuinely polyphonic style since the Middle Ages’?

At all events, it is important to interest ourselves in such problems, and to help prepare for the next great period of composition to which the twelve-tone method, whatever aspect it may have by then, will assuredly belong. It is a good sign that musicians show less and less disposition to respect those critics who are either not artists enough to recognize by now the essential figures on the contemporary scene, or else too complacent to bother about them. But even had we a Vincenzo Galilei among us, his courage and imagination might not suffice. For perhaps we are indeed witnessing an upheaval greater than any for a thousand years; and perhaps the young Frenchmen who think the present change comparable with that from monody to polyphony: in other words, that Schönberg has made it possible for us to think in another dimension ‘transcending the notions of vertical and horizontal’, are correct. Or should we be more restrained, and claim only that Schönberg has *interrelated* the horizontal and the vertical more closely than ever before? It is worth while to look at the opening bars of *Die Jakobsleiter*, printed in two different versions on pp. 41 and 42 of this issue. Indeed, the two quotations are of enthralling interest in many respects; and anyone who compares the scoring, the dynamics, the articulation, and the two arrangements of the ‘cello part with their different harmonic implications, will notice that the 1917 version is far more intransigent in spirit. On the other hand, the 1944 version is stricter in technique and more logical in design. If you look at the viola and woodwind entries in bars 6 to 8 of both quotations, you will see that in the earlier version Schönberg no longer uses the complete pattern of six notes after the third entry; and that the chord arising from these entries on the second and third beats of bar 8—the vertical projection of the same six notes—does not perfectly balance the long-held chord of the other wind instruments. It has not the same symmetry, the same spacing. I say ‘on the second and third beats’, because although, once the flute has entered, every chord contains all six notes of the original ‘cello pattern, it is the chord which falls on the beat that will have most emphasis. And it is precisely over this detail that Schönberg is so careful in his later version. Here the chord appears on the second and third beats in its most satisfying form; a form corresponding in depth, in spacing, and in its constituent intervals to the other chord held by horns, clarinets, and flute. It is a clear case of that subtle interrelation between horizontal and vertical of which I spoke just now; and this interrelation may well be one of Schönberg’s most profound suggestions, one of his greatest contributions to musical thought.

It seems that there are at present two conflicting tendencies amongst the adherents of the twelve-tone method. On the one hand, the tone-row is regarded as an instrument useful for exploiting new resources; on the other, it is treated as a phenomenon of immense importance in itself. Schönberg's attitude was the first of these. He used the tone-row in a lordly way, often 'as though it were not there'; while Webern did just the opposite, 'trying to make it speak and to elicit its secrets'. Clearly the two are incompatible. According to the one standard, Schönberg was a great composer in his twelve-tone works as well as in *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Erwartung*; according to the other, he was a reactionary who went on articulating old-fashioned forms having nothing whatever to do with the tone-row. Hans Eisler wrote nearly thirty years ago that Schönberg had gone to the trouble of bringing about a revolution in order to be a reactionary.

We have to think out this and the other problems as well as we can. Much has been made, for example, of Schönberg's lack of rhythmic inventiveness; but he discovered so many new resources that the use of stale rhythms and familiar forms was not too great a price to pay. As Virgil Thomson says, 'it is to the highest credit of Schönberg as a creator that his method should be so valuable a thing as to merit still, even to require, the collaboration of those who come after him'. We have still far to go. If this is indeed the greatest crisis for a thousand years, we shall not emerge from it for a long while yet. And we must not be impatient, for the time has not come for us to speak with perfect freedom and maturity. Nor must we compromise; for the middle road is still 'the only one which does not lead to Rome'.

I hope that the following criticisms of Schönberg, varied in approach as they are, will supplement in some ways the splendid series of broadcasts given this year by the B.B.C.; and that they will help to stimulate more interest in the work and significance of this undoubtedly great man.

W. G.



# SOME NOTES ON SCHÖNBERG

## and the 'Method of Composing with Twelve Tones'

*Roger Sessions*

Arnold Schönberg sometimes said 'A Chinese philosopher speaks, of course, Chinese; the question is, what does he say?' The application of this to Schönberg's music is quite clear. The notoriety which has, for decades, surrounded what he persisted in calling his 'method of composing with twelve tones', has not only obscured his real significance, but, by focusing attention on the *means* rather than on the music itself, has often seemed a barrier impeding a direct approach to the latter. To some extent it has even, rather curiously, distorted the view of Schönberg's historical achievement, of which the discovery of the twelve-tone method is only one phase.

Schönberg's priority in the discovery of the 'method' is assured, and he set great store by the fact of priority itself. One can understand why. He had the rare but often painful honour of remaining a 'controversial' figure even to the time of his death at the age of seventy-six; the still more painful experience of seeing even his disciples used as weapons against him—a situation from which both Berg and Webern would have been the first to recoil. It can easily have seemed to him that this priority, being tangible, was at least historically a precious asset.

The significant fact is that—paradoxically—were the question of priority really important, the event itself would have little value. Once, for instance, we were taught that Mozart introduced the clarinet into the orchestra. Later, one learned that other composers had used the clarinet before him; this fact, however, did not diminish in the least either Mozart's stature, or the historical importance of his immense contribution to the development of the clarinet. If the formulation of the twelve-tone method seems likely, in future estimates of Schönberg, to assume a less central significance than it has done up till now, this is not because the system itself is insignificant, but because Schönberg was a great composer, because his music, historically and otherwise, is greater than any system or technique.

For Schönberg, far from being a mere 'chef d'école', of whatever stature, embodied, more than any other musician of his time, one of the great critical moments of musical history. Dodecaphony—here used to mean simply the independence of the twelve notes of the chromatic scale—is the result of an impulse which has been inherent in Western music at least from the moment



that musicians began to combine voices simultaneously. As students of music history we have become familiar both with the processes involved and the reasons generally adduced for them. At one period it is a matter of avoiding the tritone; at another, the strengthening of the cadence. Later, as forms become vaster and more complex, harmonies are thrown into relief by means of 'secondary dominants'; the resources, both harmonic and linear, of the minor mode are made available within a predominantly major mode, and *vice versa*; and finally individual tones are raised or lowered, throwing the notes which follow into greater relief, and giving rise to sonorities previously unknown. Whatever their motivation, these processes are all in one way or another expressions of what may be called the chromatic impulse. Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries their use increased constantly, and penetrated more and more into the heart of the musical vocabulary. What began, in each case, as a means of emphasizing large musical design, later developed into an expressive resource, bringing contrast into the modelling of musical detail. Thus the 'chromatic harmony' of Wagner and Liszt was born; harmony based largely on 'alterations' which modified the ordinary 'root chords', which tended to challenge the compelling force of the relationships between these chords, frequently superseded such relationships, and finally undermined, or at least, qualified, the unity based on tonic, dominant, and subdominant.

The process is one through which every vital inflection, every nuance, gradually imposes itself and demands development. The ear of the composer, in other terms, lingers over arresting or expressive detail, and follows the train of thought or impulse incited by it.

This story has been told often enough; but it still has to be re-told and re-pondered, since it relates a development that leads to the very centre of the contemporary musical problem. The processes of impulse just described in purely harmonic terms, constitute, of course, only one phase of an integral musical impulse which embraces all elements, melodic and rhythmic as well.

Perhaps we should recall here what is meant by a musical problem. This must not be envisaged in technical terms alone. It is an *expressive* crisis that arises and demands solution. The technical solution is *ex post facto*, so to speak; the concept of technique, in fact, has to do with solutions, not with crises or problems as such. Furthermore, a genuine problem is the affair not so much of an individual composer as of music itself. It is a turning point in the development of the human spirit, and represents either the opening up of a new vein, or the exhaustion of an old one. Thus it does not lend itself to easy definition in words. How much easier, in fact, to take the technical ideas out of their context and define them, as it were, in the raw state—a process that actually reduces to absurdity any technical concept whatever.

The truly immense achievement of Schönberg lies in the fact that his artistic career embodies and summarizes a fundamental musical crisis. More than any other composer he led the crisis to its culmination. He accomplished this by living it through to its furthest implications. But he also found technical means which

could enable composers of his own and later generations to seek and find solutions. He opened up a new vein, towards which music had been tending; and the twelve-tone method is in essence the tool through which this vein can be exploited. Its discovery was an historical necessity; had it not been Schönberg who formulated it, others would have done so, though possibly in a much slower and more laborious manner.

Nothing could be more wrong, in fact, or more unjust to Schönberg and to his memory, than to regard the twelve-tone method as essentially limited to a single group or a single *Weltanschauung*. In too many quarters, friendly and hostile alike, a kind of orthodoxy has grown up—a convenience since orthodoxy offers both a safe refuge and an easy point of attack. But not only is dodecaphony constantly in process of development. Precisely because it is a living process and not a dogma, it means something different, and shows a different aspect, in every individual personality. It has often been remarked that composers who, in the midst of their careers, adopt the twelve-tone method, do not essentially change their styles; they continue writing the music that is conspicuously their own—not less but, let us hope, more so for having been enriched by new elements.

What is the twelve-tone method, then? Obviously, within the limits of a short article one cannot give an adequate account of it and all that it implies, or can imply. Primarily it is a means through which the twelve notes of the chromatic scale—which, unlike the diatonic scale, is uniform and therefore neutral in harmonic implication—can be organized into a basic pattern capable of supplying the impulse toward extended musical development; and which, through the recurrence of the relationships implied in it, makes possible a unity, not unlike that yielded by the principle of tonality, which is implicit in the material premises on which a musical work is based.

The tone-series plays, in dodecaphonic music, somewhat the role played by the diatonic scale in music of the pre-tonal period. It is, naturally, not an identical role; the series differs from the scale in that it has an independent design, and thus a distinct character of its own—it represents a personal choice, that is, on the part of the composer. Instead of accepting it as a predetermined datum, the latter is guided by his own musical impulse in constructing it; it will, in other words, inevitably bear the stamp of his personality, and, as his command of the technique increases, it will more and more be penetrated by his musical thought. The composer's relationship to the series and to its treatment, in fact, is exactly the same as it is to any technique which he adopts. He will—as in any other technique—achieve spontaneity in proportion to the degree of mastery which he achieves; he will learn the resources of the technique through practice, and will formulate his own principles in accordance with his own needs. As with every other technique, he will heed, modify, or ignore the rules in so far as real musical necessities demand; there is no need to insist on this point. But he will be successful in this respect only in proportion to his mastery of, and insight into, the materials themselves.

It is necessary to emphasize these points because they have been so often misunderstood, and because this misunderstanding has interfered with the appreciation of Schönberg's real achievement. He has, for instance, always opposed the use of the term 'atonality'; and this term, like the undue public emphasis given to the twelve-tone method in discussing his music, has for too long stood between the public and the music itself. The objection is that 'atonality' is essentially a negative term, but also that it has led even sympathetic listeners to a forced effort to distrust all sensations which could be construed as 'tonal'—and therefore to seek the real meaning of the music in some abstract concept which has little to do with what they hear. To be sure, dodecaphonic music cannot be analysed in terms of tonality; and even areas in the music which one seems to hear in some sense 'tonally', derive this quasi-tonal implication from relationships which, as can easily be seen, are inherent in music itself and are the product of no particular period or technique. A fifth remains a fifth, a third a third, in the twentieth as surely as in the fourteenth century. These relationships are felt, to-day as always, even though no way has yet been found by which the enlarged vocabulary of to-day can be systematized in a theoretical sense; and it is quite possible that no such systematization will be possible for some time to come.

What Schönberg achieved, then, with the formulation of the twelve-tone method, was to show his followers a way towards the practical organization of materials. The true significance of the twelve-tone method, and of Schönberg's immense achievement, cannot possibly be understood if more than this is demanded of it. No doubt, as music continues to develop, the 'twelve-tone system' also will evolve—possibly though not necessarily into something quite different from its present form. The more it develops, however, the richer Schönberg's achievement will have proven to be. For it is, precisely, *not* a new harmonic system; it does not seek to contradict or deny, but to make possible the exploitation of new resources. Its significance is the greater precisely for the fact of being something far more unpretentious, but at the same time far more vital, than a new harmonic theory or a new æsthetic principle could possibly be.



## REFLECTIONS

*Virgil Thomson*

### I

Nontonal music, any music of which the key and mode are consistently obscure, has so far always turned out to be contrapuntal. It cannot be harmonic in the conventional sense, because chords pull everything back into a tonal syntax. And if harmonic in an unconventional way, through dependence on percussive and other pitchless noises, it becomes contrapuntal through the necessity of writing for these in varied simultaneous rhythmic patterns, these being its only source of formal coherence.

Counterpoint within the conventional scales can be of three kinds. That practised in Europe from the twelfth to the fifteenth century is known as quintal, which means that, read vertically at the metrical accents, the music will be found to contain chiefly intervals of the fourth and fifth. Tertian counterpoint, which was the official style from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, exhibits principally thirds and sixths when read in this way. Secundal counterpoint, which is characteristic of our time, stacks up on the down beats as mostly seconds and sevenths.

Any of these styles can be used with either a diatonic or a chromatic melodic texture. The twelve-tone syntax, the strictest form of chromatic writing, can even be made to come out harmonically as tertial counterpoint. The music of the chief living neoclassicists—Stravinsky, Milhaud, and Hindemith—is diatonic secundal counterpoint. That of Schönberg is mostly chromatic secundal counterpoint. On account of this music's lack of a full acceptance by the general public such as that of the neoclassicists enjoys, it remains, with regard to the latter, though it was conceived, in point of time, earlier, in an 'advanced' position. The more vigorous movements among to-day's young are, in consequence, all more closely related to Schönberg than to the others.

The newer music offers a divergence, however, from Schönberg's practice in its consistent preoccupation with nondifferentiated counterpoint, a style of writing in which all the voices have equal obligations of expressivity and identical rights in rhetoric. The dramatizing of counterpoint into melody, bass, countermelody, and accompaniment is abolished in this style for an equalized texture that recalls the music of the pre-Renaissance period. There are advantages here to intimacy of expression, since the composer can speak in this technique as personally through a vocal or string ensemble as through a solo instrument. The disadvantage of it is that it is not easily applicable to diversified ensembles, where variety of timbre and technique imposes a certain differentiation of melodic style from one voice to another.

The new music, therefore, is mostly homophonic in sound, or instrumentation. It is personal in expression, too, and contrapuntal in texture. Its counterpoint is secundal and generally chromatic. If it were not the latter, it would resemble more closely than it does official, or neoclassic, modernism. It can appear tonal or nontonal when examined closely; and it can follow or not Schönberg's strict twelve-tone syntax, which this composer himself does not always follow. But its chromaticism invariably approaches atonality. This last, let us remember, is not a precise or easily attainable end. It is rather an ultimate state towards which chromaticism has always tended. Its attractiveness to our century comes, I think, from its equalization of harmonic tensions. We like equalized tensions. They are the basis of streamlining and of all those other surface unifications that in art, as in engineering, make a work recognizable as belonging to our time and to no other.

## II

The attractions of the twelve-tone system are, I think, two. Its first delight is its seriousness. No composer primarily occupied with merely pleasing or with getting on in the world ever takes it up. It is not easy to listen to; no public likes it. Its adoption is proof that one wishes to write music for music's own sake and that one is willing to sacrifice money and quick fame to that end. One can accuse the twelve-toners of scholasticism, but no one can say they are not consecrated. Its practice has literally no meretricious success to offer anybody.

Its second fascination is its dangerousness. It presents all the charms and all the perils of logic, of complete consistency. Consistency can lead artists to high triumphs of style, but it can also lead them into sterility of expression. Nobody knows yet whether consistent atonality is a new road to expressivity or an impasse of noncommunication. With the Austrians it has been a fair medium for the communication of limited sentiments. Outside Austria it has so far remained pretty closely involved with the sort of psychoanalytic depiction of intimate sentiments that was its chief expressive achievement in Vienna. If any nation in the world can enlarge this music's scope, that is the French. They should be able to give it sweetness, lightness, charm, ease, and to adapt it even more successfully to the theatre than Alban Berg has done in *Lulu*. (His *Wozzeck*, though highly chromatic, is not a twelve-tone work.)

The discipline should have a good effect on French music, too, which is in danger at present of falling into eclecticism of style. French music needs tightening up both in thought and in technique. And the international atonal style needs loosening up. Its expressivity is too tenuous, too introspective, too hopelessly standardized; and its technical practice lacks freedom. The French are good about freedom and good about objectivity. The Italian atonalists are already adding to standard practice that gracious and soaring lyric line that has long been the joy of Italian music. If the French can add to the new idiom precision of thought, taste, drama, and the power of evocation, the twelve-tone world will seem less oppressive to music lovers than it does just now.

## III

Musicians do not always know what they think of Schönberg's music, but they often like to listen to it. And they invariably respect it. Whether one likes it or not is, indeed, rather a foolish question to raise in face of its monumental logic. To share or to reject the sentiments that it expresses seems, somehow, a minor consideration compared with following the amplitude of the reasoning that underlies their exposition. As in much of modern philosophical writing, the conclusions reached are not the meat of the matter; it is the methods by which these are arrived at.

This preponderance of methodology over objective is what gives to Schönberg's work, in fact, its irreducible modernity. It is the orientation that permits us to qualify it as, also, in the good sense of the word, academic. For it is a model of procedure. And if the consistency of the procedure seems often closer to the composer's mind than the expressive aim, that fact allows us further to describe the work as academic in an unfavourable sense. It means that the emotional nourishment in the music is not quite worth the trouble required to extract it. This is a legitimate and not uncommon layman's opinion. But if one admits, as I think one is obliged to do with regard to Schönberg, that the vigour and thoroughness of the procedure are, in very fact, the music's chief objective, then no musician can deny that it presents a very high degree of musical interest.

This is not to say that Schönberg's music is without feeling expressed. Quite to the contrary, it positively drips with emotivity. But still the approach is, in both senses of the word, academic. Emotions are examined rather than declared. As in the workings of his distinguished fellow-citizen Dr. Sigmund Freud, though the subject matter is touching, even lurid, the author's detachment about it is complete. Sentiments are considered as case histories rather than as pretexts for personal poetry or subjects for showmanship. *Die glückliche Hand*, *Gurre-Lieder* and *Pierrot Lunaire* have deeply sentimental subjects; but their treatment is always by detailed exposition, never by sermonizing. Pierrot's little feelings, therefore, though they seem enormous and are unquestionably fascinating when studied through the Schönberg microscope for forty-five minutes of concert time, often appear in retrospect as less interesting than the mechanism through which they have been viewed.

The designing and perfecting of this mechanism, rather than the creation of unique works, would seem to have been the guiding preoccupation of Schönberg's career; certainly it is the chief source of his enormous prestige among musicians. The works themselves, charming as they are and frequently impressive, are never quite as fascinating when considered separately as they are when viewed as comments on a method of composition or as illustrations of its expressive possibilities. They are all secondary to a theory; they do not lead independent lives. The theory, however, leads an independent life. It is taught and practised all over the world. It is the *lingua franca* of contemporary modernism. It is even used expertly by composers who have never heard any of the works by Schönberg, by Webern, and by Alban Berg that constitute its major literature.



If that major literature is wholly Viennese by birth and its sentimental pre-occupations largely Germanic, the syntax of its expression embodies also both the strongest and the weakest elements of the German musical tradition. Its strong element is its simplification of tonal relations; its weak element is its chaotic rhythm. The apparent complexity of the whole literature and the certain obscurity of much of it are due, in the present writer's opinion, to the lack of a rhythmic organization comparable in comprehensiveness and in simplicity to the tonal one.

It is probably the insufficiencies of Schönberg's own rhythmic theory that prevent his music from crystallizing into great, hard, beautiful, indissoluble works. Instrumentally they are delicious. Tonally they are the most exciting, the most original, the most modern-sounding music there is. What limits their intelligibility, hamstrings their expressive power, makes them often literally halt in their tracks, is the naïve organization of their pulses, taps, and quantities. Until a rhythmic syntax comparable in sophistication to Schönberg's tonal one shall have been added to this, his whole method of composition, for all the high intellection and sheer musical genius that have gone into its making, will probably remain a fecund but insupportable heresy, a strict counterpoint valuable to pedagogy but stiff, opaque, unmalleable, and inexpressive for free composition.

There is no satisfactory name for the thing Schönberg has made. The twelve-tone technique, though its commonest denomination, does not cover all of it. But he has made a thing, a new thing, a thing to be used and to be improved. Its novelty is still fresh; and that means it has strength, not merely charm. Its usage by composers of all nations means that it is no instrument of local or limited applicability. Such limitations as it has are due, I believe, to the fact that it is not yet a complete system. So far as it goes it is admirable. It is to the highest credit of Schönberg as a creator that his method of creation should be so valuable a thing as to merit still, even to require, the collaboration of those who come after him.

## SCHÖNBERG AND OURSELVES

*Frank Martin*

The dogmatism of Schönberg and his school has aroused all too often the equally dogmatic opposition of those who refuse to subscribe to it. Admittedly, the twelve-tone technique did at first present itself as something either to be accepted in every detail or else utterly rejected. Far from being merely an attempt to gain new resources of expression through the use of tone-rows, with their inversions and crab forms, it forbade octaves between the different parts, and insisted, what is more, on the complete avoidance of classical tone-relations. In addition, it allowed the use of only one tone-row and its derivatives throughout any given work, even if it were a five-act opera. These things were enough to discourage interest in the new technique amongst the great majority of modern composers who believe that tonal functions are an essential element of music.

Meanwhile, the classical rules of composition were in any case being assaulted from all sides. The preparation and resolution of dissonances had been discarded, and parallel progressions of fifths and octaves led automatically to those parallel progressions of chords, both consonant and dissonant, beloved of Debussy and so many others after him. But these liberties, while they resulted in a new style, did not strike at the very roots of Western music and did not deny its essential principles, which are based on a hierarchy of relationships: octave, fifth, third, etc., and on the tonal function of the tonic, dominant and subdominant. The twelve-tone technique, on the other hand, implied the negation of this hierarchy. Indeed it found the relationship of the octave so irremediably simple that the only thing to do was to forbid it entirely. Here was something quite other than a new technique. The term 'technique' in this case covered an attempt to overthrow music as it had been understood, felt and practised from its beginnings. It set out, in fact, to create a music that would be systematically atonal. But as the human intellect cannot build on a purely negative basis, the twelve-tone technique offered by way of compensation a system of writing which was the most severe, the most rigid, ever known. To make up for what it took away, the new technique presented the composer with a mathematical problem so complicated that if he managed to practise it without mistake he already felt he had accomplished something worth while. For the musician who accepts Schönberg's system this feeling of security is perhaps its greatest danger. In a way, it is like the security felt by an academic artist so long as he holds fast to the classic precepts of harmony and counterpoint.

This is not the place to make pronouncements on the philosophical or psychological value of the system, nor yet on the strength it may bring, above all to the creative spirit, by liberating it from all kinds of inhibitions and sterile doubts.

We all know to what extent the great classical masters were inspired in their creative work by a musical technique which was, for them, irrefutable, and really constituted an æsthetic dogma. This technique, perfected through the centuries, may have acquired the force of law, but, in fact, it was only the codification of all that musicians had found best in the work of their predecessors, or the formulating of that which their own musical imagination dictated. Every rule had a clearly defined meaning, some tending to enrich the language of music, such as the prohibition of consecutive octaves between real parts, others serving to avoid hard sonorities or at least to make their logic immediately plain to the ear, others, again, intended to strengthen the tonal structure. But we also realize that in the course of the last few centuries this technique has come to complete fruition, and that all it is likely to produce at the present day is a kind of pale academism. The twelve-tone technique does not represent, as the classical technique did, the accumulated musical knowledge of a whole epoch; its main characteristic is that it is revolutionary, and so in the first place destructive. Out of the *débris* it has built something which in so far as it is systematic, is entirely intellectual and arbitrary, however brilliant the original idea may have been. As in every revolution, Schönberg's new ideas have been raised into a system which denies the validity of everything outside it, and which looks with particular suspicion on all those who come anywhere near it without adopting it in its entirety. Like all revolutionary movements, it thinks that it holds the future in its hands, and does not understand that in its essence, by its very nature, it is ephemeral, and that anything positive that comes out of it can only be fruitful if integrated with the permanent values of music.

What then is the positive element in Schönberg's technique? How can it enrich our imagination and open up new paths? I think that if we are to discover this, we must not approach it as though it were a new æsthetic faith, and certainly not as if it were a kind of magic whose formulas have only to be obeyed in order for us to produce masterpieces. Above all we must never set aside our own musical sensibility, and look to this new technique to find an easy way out of difficulties, thus reducing the whole problem of composition to a question of obeying established rules. Formal exercises in this technique could be just as useless—dangerous, even—as the purely formal discipline of counterpoint or regular fugue. For in my opinion no composer should ever write a single page that is not as beautiful as he can possibly make it, even if he is only engaging in musical jokes of the kind Bach and Mozart liked so much. On the other hand, it can be wonderfully productive to write according to strict rules, however arbitrary they may be, so long as one satisfies at the same time the severest demands of one's musical sensibility. Schönberg's rules can enrich us by rendering our sensibility more acute. Of course, the twelve-tone technique will then speak other languages than that of its inventor. Everyone will shape it according to his own temperament. For we must take these rules for what they are: one more difficulty to be added to all the others that composition involves, rather like the frames used by billiard players who are too good for the ordinary game. But we must keep freedom of action, and reserve the right to break some or all of these rules as the spirit dictates. We can enjoy being freed from the cadence and from classical tonality, but we need not necessarily give





Head of Schönberg by Anna Mahler (1951)



Arnold Schönberg and Alexander von Zemlinsky at Prague  
during the first World War

up our feeling for tonal functions, for the functional bass, and for a system of relationships which elementary acoustics show to be based on physical fact.

Working with tone-rows, then, will teach us to think and write in a new language, which everyone must develop for himself. And the first thing we shall learn will be to invent rich melodies, since they must use all twelve notes of the chromatic scale before going back to the first again. Trying to work this out takes us beyond tonal or modal melody, and makes us doubly sensitive to the return of the melody upon itself; for then it is with full consciousness of the need that we allow it to happen; we are violating a fundamental rule for a clearly defined æsthetic purpose. The note, as such, acquires a far greater value than in any other musical technique. Quite apart from its tonal function and its relation to the notes which precede, follow, or sound together with it, a G is a G in this technique, and it becomes a matter of extreme importance to decide whether it should be repeated at once in the same voice, or in another, or whether it should alternate between the various voices, or be laid aside for a time. The mind is strangely quickened by this feeling for the note itself. Here is a real enrichment, and a new demand. The prohibition of the octave brings with it another kind of enrichment: it means that when you write in more than three parts you will have progressions of chords that are always dissonant. If you then compel yourself to give true harmonic meaning to these progressions, the result will be a concentrated harmonic language such as no other technique produces. And here again it will become a conscious act, a purposeful breaking of established rule, to interrupt this harmonic density which would otherwise very soon grow excessive. Further, the use of a single twelve-tone-row certainly gives unity to a large-sized work, even if the ear does not recognize this row in its different forms, presented sometimes melodically, sometimes split up between two or more real parts. It remains at the heart of the work, being much closer in character to a highly complicated mode than to the subject of a fugue, which keeps its own particular rhythm as well as its melodic outline.

It is impossible here to discuss all the points that arise from a serious study of Schönberg's technique. I only want to bear witness that it can mean enrichment, and a widening of our musical sensibility in directions that have not yet been properly explored. But it is essential to realize that it will only do this if, at the same time, the composer refuses to let it rob him of all the riches accumulated through centuries of experiment and discovery. I cannot believe that poverty is ever a virtue in art, especially when it is self-imposed. If art has any meaning it is that it can unite elements which seem irreconcilable, that it can, for instance, express unbearable pain or disordered passion in terms of a serene order and beauty. In a technical sense, it must reconcile demands which seem contradictory, as Bach did when he used infinite contrapuntal subtlety within a perfectly ordered harmonic scheme. To come nearer home, could we not integrate the heightened sensitivity to chromaticism gained from the practice of Schönberg's method, with the fundamental principles of Western music? Might not something new and valuable arise in this way? The heroic period of great discoveries is surely over, and our task now is to organize and to construct.



## SCHÖNBERG IS DEAD

*Pierre Boulez*

Where do we stand with regard to Schönberg? The time has come for us to face this problem, however elusive and baffling it may be, however unsatisfactory the result may prove.

Paradoxically enough, though Schönberg's work is essentially experimental, it lacks ambition; or if you like we can put it in another way by saying that he pursues his experiments with unyielding ambition, but in terms of an outworn code. As a result of this contradiction our attitude to his music is full of reservations, more or less conscious, more or less intense; yet at the same time we know that his work was necessary.

For he brought about one of the greatest revolutions that has ever taken place in music. The musical materials themselves do not change, it is true: the twelve semitones; but their structural organization is changed. From tonal organization we pass to the tone-row. How does this idea of a tone-row or series come about? When does it first appear in Schönberg's work? From what deductions does it spring? In answering these questions we may come nearer to unravelling some undoubted contradictions.

Schönberg's discoveries are essentially morphological. He starts with a post-Wagnerian vocabulary, and advances naturally towards the suspension of tonality. Although definite tendencies can already be seen in *Verklärte Nacht*, in the first quartet op. 7, and in the *Chamber Symphony* op. 9, it is only in certain pages of the Scherzo and finale of the second quartet op. 10 that he makes a real attempt to break away. All these works are, therefore, in a sense, preparations, and can be looked upon now as documentary.

In the three piano pieces of op. 11 there is already an effective avoidance of tonality. Then his experiments become more and more penetrating until the famous *Pierrot Lunaire*. Three remarkable things are to be noticed in these scores: the principle of continuous variation, to the point of non-repetition; the frequency of anarchic intervals (creating the most extreme tension in terms of tonality) and the progressive ruling out of the octave, the tonal interval *par excellence*; and a clear attempt at contrapuntal construction.

Now these three characteristics are already inconsistent if not contradictory. The principle of variation does not combine happily with contrapuntal writing of a rigorous, even scholastic kind. One is made aware of an internal contradiction, especially in the case of strict canons, where the consequent is a literal reproduction

of the antecedent both in outline and in rhythm. If, on the other hand, these canons are written at the octave, an extreme antagonism arises, as can be imagined, between horizontal elements ruled by a principle of atonality, and a vertical control bringing into relief the strongest tonal element.

In spite of this one can detect an underlying order which will have its good effect in time; there is, above all, the possibility, if only an embryonic one, of a succession of intervals passing from the horizontal plane to the vertical, and *vice versa*; the given notes of a thematic cell can be separated from the rhythmic figure which produced it, the cell thereby becoming a succession of absolute intervals (if this term can be used in its mathematical sense).

To return to the use of what I called 'anarchic intervals': in the works of this period we often find fourths followed by diminished fifths, major sixths following major thirds, and all the involutions and interpolations that can be derived from these two patterns. Where the series is worked out horizontally we find a majority of intervals, where vertically, of chords, which have the least possible reference to a classical harmony based on superimposed thirds. On the other hand, we notice a great number of wide intervals producing far-flung outlines; with the result that the absolute pitch of each note takes on a hitherto undreamed-of importance.

This use of musical materials has led to a good deal of 'æstheticizing' and of special pleading, without any attempt being made to formulate the problem in general terms. Schönberg has spoken about this himself, and in such a way as to allow us the freedom to use the term 'expressionism': 'In the formal elaboration of my first works, both in particular and in general, I was guided above all by strong powers of expression, but also, and not least, by a sense of form and of musical logic inherited from tradition, and consciously developed by application.'

No further comment is needed, and we can only applaud this first phase, in which the character of Schönberg's musical thought is perfectly in keeping with his experiments, considered from an entirely formal point of view. In effect a fundamental change is taking place in æsthetics, poetry and technique—whatever flaws may be found in each of these fields. (I shall deliberately avoid saying anything as to the intrinsic value of post-Wagnerian expressionism.)

In the succession of works beginning with the *Serenade* op. 24, Schönberg seems to be carried away beyond his own discoveries; he reaches a 'no man's land' in the five piano pieces of op. 23.

This op. 23 is the first manifesto of the new style. In the fifth piece, a waltz, we are initiated into twelve-tone composition. What a strange coincidence that the first strict use of the twelve-tone technique should appear in a waltz, that archetype of German romanticism! (Satie might well have said: 'S'y preparer par des immobilités sérieuses.')

We are now confronted with a new organization of sound, as yet a rudimentary one, which is to be built up by degrees in the *Piano Suite* op. 25 and in the *Wind*

*Quintet* op. 26, and developed finally into a deliberate schematization in the *Variations for Orchestra* op. 31.

If I assert at this point that Schönberg explored the twelve-tone technique in the wrong direction and with the utmost pertinacity, it is for the following reasons: The establishment of the tone-row, in his case, was the result of an 'ultrathematization' in which, as I said before, the intervals of a theme can be considered as absolute intervals, free from any rhythmic or expressive obligation. (The third piece of op. 23, based on a pattern of five notes, is particularly significant from this point of view.)

We must recognize the fact that this 'ultrathematization' is the underlying idea of the tone-row, which is its logical outcome. At the same time the confusion in Schönberg's twelve-tone works between the theme and the series shows clearly enough his inability to foresee the world of sound brought into being by the tone-row. For him, the twelve-tone method is nothing more than a severe discipline to be enforced on chromatic composition. In treating the series merely as a regulator Schönberg failed to see its true nature.

What, then, was his ambition once the chromatic synthesis had been established by the tone-row, once the *coefficient de sécurité* had been adopted? It was to construct works of the same kind as those of the tonal world he had only just abandoned, in which the new technique of composition would prove its possibilities. But, unless some attempt was made to explore the structures specific to twelve-tone composition, how could this new technique yield any satisfactory results? By structure I mean the growth from given material to the form of a composition. On the whole Schönberg was not much preoccupied with the problem of forms that would derive essentially from a twelve-tone basis.

This explains a certain weakness in most of his twelve-tone works. The pre-classical and classical forms ruling most of his compositions were in no way historically connected with the twelve-tone discovery; the result is that a contradiction arises between the forms dictated by tonality and a language of which the laws of organization are still only dimly perceived. It is not only that this language finds no sanction in the forms used by Schönberg, but something more negative: namely, that these forms rule out every possibility of organization implicit in the new material. The two worlds are incompatible, and he has tried to justify one by the other.

This can hardly be called a valid procedure, and it has led to a kind of twisted romantic classicism that has a forbidding mildness about it. It was not putting much faith in twelve-tone composition to use other more guaranteed methods of construction, and so to prevent it from developing naturally along its own lines; indeed, it was an attitude which left the way open to every sort of survival, as we cannot fail to see.

For example, the persistent use of accompanied melody, of counterpoint based on principal and subsidiary voices (*Hauptstimme* and *Nebenstimme*). This, surely, is a most unfortunate inheritance from romanticism? It is not only in



such outworn concepts, but also in the style itself that we can detect reminiscences of a discarded world. For stereotyped clichés abound with Schönberg, clichés typical of a romanticism at once ostentatious and outmoded. I mean those continual anticipations with expressive stress on the harmony note, and those false appoggiaturas; also those broken chords, tremolos, and repetitions which sound so terribly hollow and deserve only too well the name of 'subsidiary voices' which they have been given. Lastly there are the poor, and even ugly, rhythms, in which variations of the classical technique appear in the most disconcertingly simple way.

How can we follow without reserve a style so full of contradictions and discrepancies? These might be excused if only the technique were severe. But what are we to think of Schönberg's American period? How are we to interpret his return to polarized functions, even to tonal functions, except as a further proof of his inconsistency? All severity in composition is thrown overboard from now on. Pseudo-thematic octaves, pseudo-cadences, strict canons at the octave return all over again; as though we had arrived at a new method merely in order to recompose the music of the past.

Could he have acted differently? A plain 'No' would be a naïvely arrogant answer to this question. At the same time we can see why Schönberg's twelve-tone music was bound to come to a dead end. In the first place he explored the new technique in only one direction. Rhythm was neglected, and even such questions as intensity, dynamics, *etc.*, considered in a structural sense. Not that anyone would dare to blame him on this account.

And we must not forget his remarkable preoccupation with *timbres*, with *Klangfarbenmelodie*, for this, if generalized, might lead to a *timbre* series. The fundamental reason for the stalemate lies in his misunderstanding of the FUNCTIONS arising from the very principle of the series. Schönberg uses the tone-row simply as a lowest common denominator to ensure the semantic unity of each work; but the elements of the language thus obtained are organized according to an already existing rhetoric, and so there is no intrinsic unity.

It is not devilry, but only the most ordinary common sense which makes me say that, since the discoveries made by the Viennese, all composition other than twelve-tone is *useless*. (This does not, of course, imply that the works of every twelve-tone composer are valuable.) To challenge this statement in the name of freedom will hardly do, for this supposed freedom has a strong look of 'old chains' about it. If Schönberg failed, it is not by ignoring the fact that we shall come any nearer to solving the problems confronting us through the birth of a contemporary language.

Perhaps it would be better to dissociate Schönberg's work altogether from the phenomenon of the tone-row. The two have been confused with obvious pleasure, sometimes with unconcealed dishonesty—and a certain Webern has been only too easily forgotten. Perhaps we might convince ourselves that the tone-row is an historical necessity. Perhaps, like Webern, we might succeed in writing works

whose form arises inevitably from the given material. Perhaps we could enlarge the field of twelve-tone composition to include other intervals than the semitone: micro-intervals, irregular intervals, complex sounds. Perhaps the principle of the tone-row could be applied to the five elements of sound, viz., pitch, duration, tone-production, intensity, timbre.

Meanwhile we must beware of looking upon Schönberg as a kind of Moses, dying within sight of the promised land after bringing the tables of the law down from a Mount Sinai which some would like so much to confuse with Walhalla. (All this time the dance round the golden calf is in full swing.) We are certainly indebted to him for his *Pierrot Lunaire* . . . ; and for a few other outstanding works.

It is time, however, that we did away with misunderstandings and contradictions; and time to learn from his errors.

Let us then, without any wish to provoke indignation, but also without shame or hypocrisy, or any melancholy sense of frustration, admit the fact that SCHÖNBERG IS DEAD.

# TONALITY IN TWELVE-TONE MUSIC

*Roberto Gerhard*

'Atonal,' that tiresome word, was probably in its origin just a journalist's gibe, like 'cubism.' It was obviously no more intended to define than it was meant to be flattering. Yet for some unaccountable reason it seems to have made its fortune almost at once. It came into current use towards the end of the 1914 war, and we see it taken up, apparently without any qualms, by composers and critics alike. We have all been bothered with it ever since. And now there is no hope of ever getting rid of it. It has become history. We shall have to go on using it, since to drop it at this stage would only be more confusing. At the same time, it is disquieting to realize that this tampering with terminology threatens to become a habit. 'Athematic' is the latest arrival. It is difficult to see what is the point in blunting yet another useful word, although there is, of course, one thing it does positively indicate, and that is an admission of failure to account adequately for whatever it is meant to describe.

However, since 'atonal' was first used in connexion with some early works of Schönberg and his disciples Berg and Webern, it will be of interest to know what Schönberg thought of it. That is made perfectly clear in a footnote he added to the third edition of his *Harmonielehre* (p. 487),<sup>1</sup> in which he says: 'To call any kind of tone-relationship 'atonal' is as inadmissible as it would be to call colour-relationships 'a-spectral,' or 'a-complementary.' There is no such antithesis. Furthermore, we have not yet even examined the question as to whether that which links these chords together does not constitute, precisely, the tonality of a twelve-tone series. This might quite well prove to be the case. . . .'

It is an illuminating remark. The *tonality of a twelve-tone series* . . . the two notions had never been brought together like that before. Their conjunction was entirely new and unforeseen. It amounted to what must in fact be regarded as a bold hypothesis which, some of us nowadays think, subsequent developments have proved correct.

Let us try to view the picture as it would appear to an observer, say, in 1921. New developments had been taking place in music from the first decade<sup>2</sup> of the century onwards, for which the champions of atonality, not surprisingly, had no positive interpretation to offer. It had merely been observed that new chords had been appearing which could not possibly be traced back to any of the standard

<sup>1</sup> Arnold Schönberg: *Harmonielehre*, 3rd edition. Universal Edition, Vienna, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> 1908 is the year in which Schönberg's piano pieces op. 11, Berg's Piano Sonata, and Webern's *Passacaglia* for orchestra were written.



forms of tonal harmony (piled-up thirds); that the concatenation of these chords could not be described or understood as in any way realizing a harmonic function which would imply a tonal centre; that—by Jove!—this very centre itself seemed to have vanished for good; at any rate it was not decisively to be felt anywhere, nor could its existence be shown with any conclusiveness theoretically. It had been noticed, furthermore, that melodies were being written which used remarkably many notes of different pitch (8, 9, sometimes up to 12 different notes) joined in chains of intervals such as could not possibly be referred to any known scale, and were therefore not amenable to harmonic treatment in any tonal sense. More than this, the convention of the key-signature had been dropped altogether, so that music had even ceased pretending to be written in one particular key. Last of all, it had become increasingly evident that musical form presented entirely new aspects at all levels, and that the old notion of a more or less vastly magnified cadence could nowhere be taken for an articulating and shaping force any longer. In short, it was abundantly clear what new music was not. In the circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that 'atonal' should have been thought to sum up the state of affairs well enough after all.

Admittedly, it was extremely difficult—in many ways it still is—to describe any of these new developments in a positive sense. It probably always was and always will be so. If you ask a research-scientist pointblank what it is he is trying to find out, the impression you'll probably get from his answer is that he doesn't really quite know himself; and yet every step in his research seems to have been planned and carried out with painstaking accuracy. True, there is also a kind of feeling out in the dark . . . , though not to be confused with Unamuno's blind man groping in the dark for a black cat which is not there. The cat is certainly very much there. And there is system as well as purpose in the search, even if both are hard to define. Oddly, or perhaps significantly enough, it is the artist's speculative faculties which are most likely to lead him astray. There is an amusing gallery of Czecho-Slovak theorists in Alois Hába's *Neue Harmonielehre*<sup>3</sup>, each in historical succession postulating a further stage in the widening field of harmonic relationships within the tonal system. Hába himself caps the series with a thesis of his own which affirms that 'each tone can be linked with or related to any other tone; each interval, each chord (of however many notes) can be linked with or related to any other interval or chord within any of the possible systems' (i.e., the diatonic, chromatic, quarter-tone or any other system). It cannot be denied that there is a certain beauty in the sheer comprehensiveness of the proposition. But coming down to earth, doesn't it simply mean that 'everything is allowed'; that you may do exactly what you like? Indeed, it is difficult to see what else it can mean. And as for a positive definition of 'atonality,' this is probably the nearest we shall be able to get to one. It was a liberation from traditional formulæ all round, in harmony, melody and form; it was freedom to flit even from system to system if you were so minded.

<sup>3</sup> Alois Hába: *Neue Harmonielehre des Diatonischen-, Chromatischen-, Viertel-, Drittel-, Sechstel-, und Zwölftel-Tonsystems*. Fr. Kistner & C. F. W. Siegel, Leipzig, 1927.

In every period of strongly-marked transition there is probably a phase of anarchy which dissolves and disorganizes, thereby providing 'fresh randomness.' It may well be that a certain store of randomness is vitally necessary, and that we cannot risk letting it run too low. The whole 'atonal' episode might, therefore, be regarded as a tremendous adventure providing fresh randomness, on a perhaps unprecedented scale, so that a new system of order could grow out of it. It is only too clear, on the other hand, how oppressive the 'weight of too much liberty' can be. Where anything is possible at any moment, nothing can ever happen *of necessity*. There is the flaw. And to restore this element of 'necessity' was one of Schönberg's constant aims throughout his atonal period.

Let us review the steps leading from atonality to the fully developed twelve-tone technique. In comparison with the highly articulated structure of the diatonic scale, the chromatic scale is invertebrate. It has neither beginning, middle nor end; it is something of a tape-worm, really. It lacks all formative potentiality and provides no structural principle beyond what one might call 'cohesiveness through smallest interval-transitions,' which is of small account anyhow. Obviously it could never supersede the diatonic scale as a basis of composition.

All the same, the tendency in composers to treat all the notes of the chromatic scale with absolute freedom is clearly gaining ground. It shows itself in the already mentioned fact that the new melodic line has begun to use more notes than those contained in any one scale. Melodic lines with 8, 9, sometimes 12 different notes are indeed becoming more and more frequent. At the same time there is a growing disinclination, especially on the part of Schönberg and his disciples, to repeat in any given phrase a note that has already been used, thus preventing this note from taking on special importance from the very fact that it reappears at different points of the phrase. There is nothing 'cerebral' or even deliberate in this. We must not think of it as a precept arbitrarily promulgated and then obeyed. On the contrary, composers had obeyed it instinctively long before they became conscious of doing so.

The same tendencies can be observed also in the field of harmony. Trying to find an explanation for the fact that certain progressions which broke all accepted rules of harmony were nevertheless felt to be plausible and 'natural,' Schönberg suggests that 'such progressions seem to be regulated by the tendency to include in the second chord only notes which were not present in the first one',<sup>4</sup> a remark which, by implication, almost postulates the twelve-tone technique already. He then adds: 'I have also observed that octave-doublings are rare. The reason for this may be that a note thus doubled would outweigh the others and become a kind of root-note, which is surely not intended.' However this may be, what I want to emphasize is, firstly, that the avoidance of note-repetitions in the melodic line and of octave-doublings in chords did originate in practice and not in precept; and secondly, that the two are in reality one and the same thing making itself felt in the two media. The whole point is that the susceptibility

<sup>4</sup> *Harmonielehre*, p. 504.

to note-repetitions and doublings once again anticipates the twelve-tone technique, which alone can explain and justify it: it reveals a new feeling for balance in terms no longer of the 'horizontal' or of the 'vertical' alone, but in terms of the structural unit of the twelve-tone cell in which the function of each note is unique.

One final thing: the freedom with which composers were using all the twelve notes of the chromatic scale, combined with the fact that this scale in itself was intrinsically unsuitable as a theoretical or practical basis of composition, seems to leave only one alternative, namely, some way of organizing the twelve notes other than the scale. From this to the tone-rows or 'series' of the twelve-tone technique is clearly only a short step. Of course, it is easy enough for us now to see that the idea of the 'series' was the logical and inevitable outcome. Yet it must be stressed again that it was not arrived at through theoretical speculation, but that in practice it took Schönberg a very round-about way to reach it.

In one of the last chapters of his *Harmonielehre* (p. 466) (whose first edition, it must be remembered, was published in 1911), Schönberg makes the following statement: 'I believe that a further development in the theory of harmony is not to be expected for the present. Modern music, which makes use of chords of six notes and more, seems to find itself in a stage corresponding to that of early polyphonic music. It is probably going to be easier to discriminate in matters of chord-structure by something similar to the figured-bass system, than to arrive at a clear understanding of the functional significance of chords by the method of tracing them back to degrees of the scale. It seems—and this will probably become clearer as time goes on—that we are heading for a new epoch of polyphonic style, in which chords, much as in early polyphony, will be the *resultant* of part-writing, that is to say, they will be justified entirely by the melodic lines' (italics mine).

Clearly, harmony was at a discount. It was felt that Rameau's extraordinary pronouncement: 'Harmony alone can rouse the passions. Melody saps them of their vitality,' was no longer true, but rather the reverse.

In 1924 Schönberg went to Italy to conduct some performances of *Pierrot Lunaire*, and I remember him saying this on his return: 'One of my Italian critics pointed out that there is not a single concord in the whole of *Pierrot Lunaire*. I have not the faintest idea whether this is true or not. But I do know that if there is one such concord, it will be found to have been introduced and 'resolved' with the same care that the old masters took over discords. This is a question of part-writing (*Stimmführung*) to us; harmony as such does not enter into it (*Harmonie steht nicht zur Diskussion*).' In the course of the conversation he added: 'The reason why we must not use any of the traditional chords without the greatest precautions; why, in fact, I think we had better do without them altogether, is not difficult to discover. Our new musical language is in its early phase of development; promiscuity with elements of the older system at this stage could, therefore, only obstruct and delay its natural growth. But when it consolidates itself the time will come, no doubt, for the reintegration of many



elements from the older system which for the present we must firmly discard.' Both statements struck me as memorable.

*Harmony does not enter into it*; what the statement in reality amounted to was the dismissal of harmony as a constructive principle. That was certainly no trifle. Harmony, after all, had been the corner-stone of musical thinking since the days of the Renaissance, though it could in truth not be denied that the *serva* had in time become *padrona*, and a very masterful one at that; and yet, small wonder, considering the strange ideas Rameau had put into her head. All the same, it was a momentous decision for Schönberg to take. To be fully appreciated, the story of the break must be read in works like the *Five Orchestral Pieces*, op. 16, *Erwartung*, op. 17, or *Pierrot Lunaire*, op. 21, all written between 1908 and 1914. The audacity of the conception and the sleep-walking sureness of touch in the execution still take one's breath away.

It is in fact no longer possible to give an adequate harmonic analysis of these works, because they are no longer 'harmonically' conceived. It is no longer possible to pinpoint a harmonic skeleton and express it neatly in figured-bass symbols, because, in slipping its cables, harmony has shed all sense of static rootedness, and assumed a new mode of being of which the distinctive note is its essentially *kinetic* nature: all is now flux and transience, '*sans rien qui pèse ou qui pose. . .*' The traditional notion of harmony as 'sound-perspective' has vanished in Schönberg as completely as geometric perspective has disappeared from contemporary painting. Indeed, the whole concept of 'harmony' has exchanged the specific, technical meaning it had in the musician's vocabulary for one which comes quite close to the general meaning with which it is used in the other arts. In driving away from its old anchorage harmony enters in reality a new, immeasurably expanding sphere. A new harmonic consciousness arises, infinitely more subtle and complex than before. How the imagination plots its course in these uncharted expanses we do not know; all we can say is that it seems to take its bearings by the light of immediate experience.

If melody was now to assume the role of supreme formative agency, it was essential that it should develop its own means of promoting co-ordination and coherence far beyond what had been felt sufficient in 'harmonically' conceived music. It was this which led to a revival of interest in pre-homophonic methods of composition, and above all to the contemporary renaissance of counter-point which dates from Schönberg's works of this 1908-1914 period.

The two points to be emphasized here for the direct bearing they have upon the conception and genesis of the twelve-tone technique are, first, the clear realization of the fact that it is the *fixed character of a given series of intervals*, independently of rhythm, which constitutes the essence of strict canonic imitation; because interval relationships are inviolable, while metrical proportions and rhythmical pattern admit at least of variation in size (and by implication this also postulates the essential identity of all the forms of the series—direct, crab-form, mirror and mirrored crab-form—as simply different *aspects* of one and the same series). The second point, more important still, refers to what we must recognize

as a unique feature of the canonic subject, namely, its being the only type of musical thought which, in its purely melodic entity, *implies its own complete system of accompaniment*, in the form of a fully articulated polyphonic structure. Taken together and generalized, the two points add up to the following notion: *a fixed series of intervals* (independent of metre and rhythm) *as an abstract form of musical thought implying its own complete system of accompaniment*. This is almost a definition of the main idea in the twelve-tone technique; it shows its canonic roots and constitutes clear evidence of its kinship with strict imitative contrapuntal style. It also illustrates the meaning of Schönberg's remark in his letter to Slonimsky<sup>5</sup>: 'I was always occupied with the aim to base the structure of my music consciously on a unifying idea, which would not only produce all the other ideas but would also regulate their accompaniment as well as the chords, the 'harmonies.''

The 'method of composition with twelve tones related only to one another'—as Schönberg called it—is just what it says it is: a method of composition. It cannot, therefore, be too strongly emphasized that it is entirely and exclusively the concern of the composer. It does not concern the listener at all. Above all, the listener must not believe that, if only he knew more about it theoretically, he might find twelve-tone music less difficult. This is a hopeless delusion. He will find it easier to listen to only if he hears more of it, often enough. He must, of course, learn how to listen to it, but this will come only from listening itself; and he must remember that it is the *music*, and nothing but the music which matters. It must particularly be stressed that the listener is not supposed to detect the 'series' on which a given piece of twelve-tone music is based, as if it were Ariadne's thread; or to follow the ways in which it is woven into the sound-fabric. That, incidentally, can only be discovered by analysis, and although listening and analysis have certainly something in common, they are basically antithetic mental operations.

To insist, however, that twelve-tone technique is no concern of the listener, is not to say that he is not affected by it. There can be no doubt of that, I think. The fact that the listener may remain unaware of the specific effect it has upon him does not in the least detract from the reality of that effect; just as there can be no doubt that an intelligent listener who is yet entirely ignorant of the principle of tonality may still genuinely enjoy, and even form a valid æsthetic judgment of, a piece written, say, in C major.

For this is the real issue: the twelve-tone technique must be understood and appraised as a new principle of tonality.

Whether we agree or not with this view will, of course, depend upon the degree of generality we are prepared to attribute to the idea of 'tonality.' We must define it. Tonality, I suggest, is an all-embracing principle of correlation based upon an *a priori* arrangement of our tone-material; this arrangement to be

<sup>5</sup> Nicolas Slonimsky, *Music since 1900*, New York, 1937.

understood as an instituted order in which the value attached to any single element is relative to and emanates from the whole. Any method of composition which strictly adheres to and is ruled by such an order can be properly said to manifest the principle of tonality. Tonality, therefore, can manifest itself in many different ways. What has hitherto been called 'tonality' by antonomasia, that is, the order based upon the diatonic scale and the common chord, was accurately defined by Tovey as 'the harmonic perspective of music.' We have seen that with the abandonment of harmony as a constructive principle, the notion of 'sound-perspective' also disappeared from atonal music. In twelve-tone music the principle of tonality manifests itself in the strict adherence to the *a priori* arrangement of the twelve notes as shown in the given 'series,' and, consequently, in the fact that the 'series' is the key by which to determine the values attached to any notes and their relations. Thus any arrangement of the twelve notes, any series—except, for the reason already mentioned, the chromatic scale—may be taken as the 'tonal' order which will rule for the whole duration of the work. The series, i.e., the 'tonal order,' may change from work to work, but the principle involved remains the same.

If we are to understand how, from the listener's standpoint, an order which he does not grasp intellectually may all the same condition his listening, it is perhaps necessary to regard the mental activity involved in listening to music as embracing probably several simultaneous levels of awareness. If one comes to think of the bewildering complexity and lightning speed of the mental operations involved in the process of decoding an inpouring stream of sensorial stimuli and translating it into aural images, it is perhaps not unreasonable to assume that music is to any normal listener what mathematics seem to be to the extraordinary type of the calculating boy, or to the Elberfeld horses, which can perform intricate operations of mental arithmetic, literally in a flash. It seems natural that the internal regularities, the subcutaneous net of connexions, the logic and sustained consistency produced by the organizing principle of tonality, must register at a comparatively dim level of consciousness; they would clearly throw everything out of focus if they could make themselves conspicuous and occupy for an instant the close-up plane of our attention. It is, no doubt, at a level below the threshold of full consciousness that we would expect such a general law as the principle of tonality to be operative.

In addition to this, the closely-knit texture produced by the cellular organization peculiar to the twelve-tone technique also assumes, or is capable of assuming, that other connective function which in tonal and atonal music exercises itself through the tissue of motive-relationships, also sometimes loosely referred to as 'thematic unity'. This works probably at a higher level of consciousness than the general law of tonality, yet need not necessarily—must not, perhaps—be grasped intellectually to be fully effective. These, I suggest, are two of the ways in which twelve-tone technique is expected to affect the listener. It will therefore be clear that he may truly let the twelve-tone technique take care of itself, or rather that he may let the composer take care of it. In other words, the composer



must needs talk grammar, but grammar is not what he is talking about, or what he expects the listener to be consciously attending to.

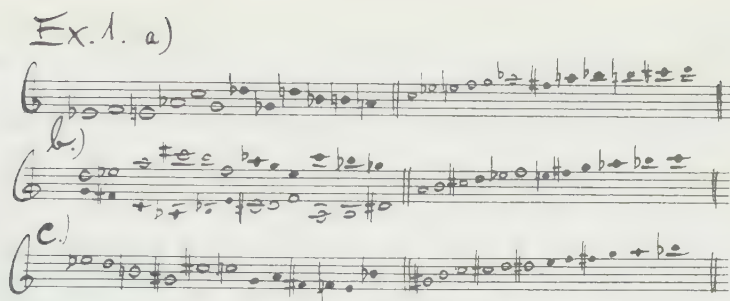
I do not propose to describe in any detail how the twelve-tone technique works from the composer's end. As we cannot afford, unfortunately, the number of musical examples which that would require, I shall assume that my reader is familiar at least with the succinct exposition Schönberg gave of the subject in his lecture on *Composition with Twelve Tones* delivered at the University of California, Los Angeles, and subsequently published in the volume of his collected essays, *Style and Idea*<sup>6</sup>; and I shall refer when necessary to the musical examples printed there.

How, it may be asked, does a composer choose and fix on a particular series? There is probably more than one answer to this question. In the first place, there seems to be no valid reason why the choice should not be settled *a priori* on purely theoretical grounds. Since the number of different series we can obtain through permutation is of the order of hundreds of millions, naïve detractors have assumed that the choice must necessarily be entirely arbitrary: you put the twelve notes into a hat, shake the hat, extract the notes one by one, and abide then by the chance order of the drawing. Few composers would admit, I suppose, that this is their own way of settling the question, yet the suggestion is by no means as ridiculous as it sounds. It caricatures, by simply showing it up in crude isolation, the inevitable element of chance which is an essential ingredient in all creative work. So much so, that to most composers, I imagine, the question of deliberate choice of a series need not arise at all, the element of chance being comprised and wrapped up in the very process of invention. I mean that the series is sometimes given outright, sometimes foreshadowed in its main outline in the first, spontaneous, creative thought; *der Einfall*, as the Germans call it. The series will then be read from the context, and, when necessary, adjustments will be made to settle for good the question of the consecutive order of the twelve notes. There is nothing essentially different in this from the adjustments one has to practise sometimes on a fugue-subject in order to make it fit the requirements of double and triple counterpoint.

Whichever way the consecutive order of the series is finally arrived at makes no difference at all to the next step, which is the really important one: the *nature* of the series has to be understood, its properties have to be discovered, its 'genius' has to be apprehended. It must be realized that the internal structure peculiar to a series will favour certain lines of development, while discountenancing or even effectually barring others; this individual quality of the series—its grain, as it were—has as far-reaching an influence upon my subject-matter and mode of treatment as the nature of the sculptor's or the painter's or the engraver's material can have upon their respective styles and techniques.

According to its structure a series can be shown to belong to one of three possible types: (a) series whose antecedent (notes 1 to 6) is reproduced by

<sup>6</sup> Schönberg: *Style and Idea*, Philosophical Library, New York.



transposition in the consequent (notes 7 to 12) either in the same order or in crab-form, or else in a new permutational form (this is a comparatively rare type; about one series in ten belongs to it); (b) series whose antecedent is inverted in the consequent, again either in the original or in the reverse order, or else in permutation (about one series in four belongs to this second type); and (c) asymmetrical series, that is, series whose antecedent and consequent are structurally different (more than half belong to this last type). Schönberg has consistently favoured series of the second type, for two main reasons: first, because a series of this type has always<sup>7</sup> a mirror-inversion (though not at an invariable interval, as seems to have been implied) which can be deployed together with the direct form of the series without producing octaves or unisons; in other words, the antecedent of the mirror-form contains all the notes of the consequent of the ground form though, of course, in a different order, and *vice versa*. The second reason for the privileged position of this second type of series is that it casts a wider net of relationships with transpositions of the ground series than either of the two other types, this plane of relationships corresponding fairly closely to key-relationships in the old tonal system.

From the standpoint of the composer the immediate effect of the application of the twelve-tone technique to composition, and especially the effect of its two main rules—the continuous rotation of the series in any of its four forms or transpositions of them, and the inviolability of the consecutive order—is to give the tone-material, which atonality had ‘softened’ and reduced to a state of over-plasticity, a new, exhilarating quality of resistance, hardness, almost intractableness. The nature, the ‘grain’ of the series wants to be obeyed. It is no longer possible to do ‘anything you like’ or exactly as you like. By reintroducing compulsion and restrictions, ‘*par un système de gênes bien placées*,’ necessity has come again into its own, and with it a positive measure of liberty.

Some critics seem to think that the twelve-tone technique imposes a rigid equalitarian system, where it is not possible or admissible for any one note to attract more attention than any of its neighbours. Not at all; fundamentally all the twelve notes are equal in the sense that none can claim the position of a tonic

<sup>7</sup> The series of Schönberg’s *Quintet for Wind Instruments*, op. 26, given as Ex. 4 in his lecture (p. 115) has also its mirror-inversion fulfilling the conditions described, though not a fifth below but a minor ninth below the ground series.

or a centre, but in practice some can be 'more equal than others,' in the Orwellian phrase, whenever there is a musical reason for it. Even a very small amount of analysis ought to make this clear; as an extreme example one might quote the bagpipe-drone *G* in Schönberg's *Musette* from the *Suite* op. 25.

It must not be forgotten that the twelve-tone technique is just over a quarter of a century old, and that it is in full evolution. It would be idle to speculate on how it may develop in future. But something useful can perhaps be learnt from the measure of evolution we can already observe in Schönberg's own work. To follow this in adequate detail from, say, his op. 25 onwards, would entail a major work of analysis. I shall limit myself to a few closing remarks on some of the less 'regular' aspects of Schönberg's own treatment of the twelve-tone technique which, so far as I am aware, have attracted little attention as yet.

It is quite evident that Schönberg made in his own work a very full survey of all the possibilities his central idea contains. This process of exploration did not for long proceed in a straight line, but turned often upon itself in complete revolutions comprising even sporadic returns to composition in the old key-system. It is therefore possible to divide the ground covered into two fields, roughly speaking, which come under opposite poles of attraction. The one pole could be said to stand for increasing radicalism, the other for an inalienable sense of tradition; the one would stand for the vital necessity of experiment and *renouveau*, the other for reintegration of vital elements from the past and, in a general sense, for the indispensability of *routine* for survival. I would place in the first field works like the *Variations for Orchestra* op. 31, the *String Quartet* op. 37, or the *String Trio* op. 45; the second field would be represented by works like the comic opera *Von Heute auf Morgen* op. 32, the *Ode to Napoleon* op. 41, or the *Piano Concerto* op. 42.

The score of *Von Heute auf Morgen* presents for the first time, so far as I know, the following remarkable feature: the law of the consecutive order of the twelve notes of the series, hitherto regarded as inviolable, is sometimes deliberately disregarded; and this happens not only at a later stage of the work, where it might be assumed that the series had sufficiently established itself to allow for digressions, but quite early on, and before the series could possibly have registered at any level of consciousness, in fact, in this particular case, as early as the third bar from the beginning. Here are the first four bars; the series of *Von Heute auf Morgen* is the one given in Ex. 1 b as an instance of a series of the second type:

EX. 2

Sehr langsam (♩ = 60)

Handwritten musical score for Ex. 2, showing the first four bars of a piece. The notation is in 2/2 time, with a tempo marking 'Sehr langsam (♩ = 60)'. The score features a complex series of notes, including accidentals and fingerings, with some notes circled and numbered. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.



It will be noticed that, in bars three and four, the bass has the six notes of the consequent of the mirror-form in an entirely new order. Still more remarkable, however, is the fact that the new arrangement of these six notes is the one that comes closest to scale-form; it is, indeed, one of the eighty different hexachords<sup>5</sup> possible from the combination of our twelve different notes. This hexachord naturally implies a second, complementary hexachord containing the other six notes; and since, as already shown, the series belongs to the second type, we must expect this second hexachord to be a mirror-inversion of the first. And in fact it appears in the next bar of the score, in place of the consequent of the ground-form of the series. These and similar variations of the serial order appear on every page of the work.

This raises an important question: how are such deviations from the twelve-tone canon to be judged? I said in the last paragraph but one that the rule of the inviolability of the consecutive order of the twelve notes of the series was being deliberately disregarded by Schönberg. This is not quite true; he is not just taking liberties with the serial order; what he is doing is something quite different. Our example goes to show that he treats either of the two halves of the series as interchangeable with its corresponding hexachord—which postulates a relation of identity between the two interchangeable units. Now, this is undoubtedly correct, and must be allowed to rest on the same principle on which Rameau claimed the identity of a triad and its inversions. In effect, whether the triad appears in its root-position or in its first or second inversions, it is still the same chord, though under different aspects—a fact which we acknowledge in the figured-bass symbols by which we express the chord. And Rameau's principle holds equally true of any chord of more than three notes as well.

All these variations affecting the position of the notes within the unit, whether it be a triad or a hexachord, are, of course, the result of permutation. And this, in my opinion, is precisely what is shown in *Von Heute auf Morgen*, namely, the acceptance of the principle of permutation (within antecedent and consequent) based on a recognition of the fact that beyond the actual series there is an ultimate ground, an abstract archetype—represented by the coupled hexachords—of which the individual series is only one *aspect*, that is, one of the possible permutations. The hexachord-dichotomy is the division of the series generally favoured by Schönberg; but what holds true here would apply equally in the case of a series regarded as consisting of three tetrachords, nor would division into unequal groups

<sup>5</sup> In his catalogue of possible chords of 3, 4, etc., up to 12 different notes, Hába has got this and also the other figures wrong (*Neue Harmonielehre*). The correct numbers are as follows: chords of three notes 19; of four notes 42; of five notes 66; of six notes 80; of seven notes 80; of eight notes 66; of nine notes 42; of ten notes 19; eleven transpositions of the one eleven-note chord are possible and there is, of course, only one twelve-note chord. Such are my powers of argument, however, that I was unable to convince Hába of the correctness of my numbers in the course of a discussion lasting from Victoria Station to Glyndebourne. And yet nothing, it seemed to me, could be easier than to show the source of Hába's miscalculations. Let me try it on my reader: Hába lists, for instance, these as different chords: *c-d-g* and *c-f-g*. They are not; the second—take it in its first inversion, *f-g-c*—is nothing but a transposition of the first one, a fourth up. Hába goes on repeating this same mistake over and over again without ever detecting the identity of a chord when it appears in transpositions or inversions which look different to the eye.

make any difference. To sum up: the identity of the series will be maintained in spite of permutation, provided that this takes place exclusively within the constituent units (hexachord, tetrachord, etc.), in other words, as long as these constituent units maintain *their* identity and place.

This seems to me to confirm the view that the fundamental idea of the twelve-tone technique is in fact a new formulation of the principle of tonality.

It is important to realize, however, that the treatment which strictly observes the given consecutive serial order is by no means divorced from the permutational treatment I have been trying to outline. They do not exclude each other; they can, in fact, coexist. The latter can even sometimes be made out, *in a figurative sense*, within the former. For instance, the device (constantly used in the strict treatment) of breaking up the series into complementary groups, sometimes leads to one of the parts, generally the principal one, arriving, through more than one rotation of the series, at a deployment of the twelve notes in a pseudo-permutational order. See, for instance, example 9 in Schönberg's lecture,<sup>9</sup> where the rotation is absolutely regular, yet the bassoon part—taken separately over the nine bars of the example which comprise three rotations—deploys a full series in the following pseudo-permutational order: 12, 11, 10—3, 2, 1—6, 5, 4—9, 8, 7. Or, again, series of the second type have, as we have seen, a mirror-inversion whose antecedent will contain all the notes of the ground series' consequent, and *vice versa*, but in different order, that is to say, in a *de facto* permutation of the order of the ground series.

From the standpoint of the permutational treatment, the original consecutive order of the series (as given in the first germinative idea or as adopted after adjustments) can be allowed a privileged position as *thematically* significant, and be used, as Schönberg says, 'in the manner of a motive.' Thus the two treatments can go hand in hand, and the prevalence of the one or of the other will be determined by the degree of stress one wishes to lay on thematic connexions altogether.

The crucial evidence for the compatibility of the two modes of treatment is to be found in Schönberg's *Piano Concerto* op. 42. The series is deployed (top of the solo piano part, right hand) in its four forms successively (direct, crab-form of the mirror, crab-form of the original and mirror-form), drawing a superbly arched *cantabile* line over the first 39 bars. From the first bar on, however, the series is doubly related: on the melodic plane it carries forward the thematic line in strict serial order, while in each bar it draws complementarily for its accompaniment upon the *rest* of the hexachord, in free permutation, so that several rotations take place on the textural plane for each rotation taking place in the top line. Consequently an analysis on the principle of the strict serial order alone will have to put up with a number of loose ends, whereas if one accepts the principle of permutation everything falls into pattern at once.

The difference between the two modes of treatment ought to be clear by now,

<sup>9</sup> Loc. cit., p. 122-23.

if I haven't hopelessly confused my reader: we might say that the serial technique is to the permutational technique what *strict imitative contrapuntal style* is to the *free melodic style* of homophonic music. The brief life-history of twelve-tone music would thus seem to reproduce on a miniature scale the salient phases of the historical evolution of Western music, just as the human embryo is said to pass in its development through the salient phases of man's biological evolution. The strict serial technique would seem to be more congenial to the artist who is concerned rather with the 'mathematical world of ornament' than with the 'representational' world—the artist, that is, whose deepest thoughts are expressed in a constructional treatment of the tone-material. The artist of the opposite type, on the other hand, might conceivably feel that it is possible to have a surfeit of *esprit de géométrie*; that homogeneity of texture and technical treatment may further the cause of unity without necessarily achieving it; that unity, after all, may be achieved even with disparate materials (which would seem to be one of the more engaging problems to set oneself); in short, to hammer away at cause and effect all the time does not seem a vital necessity. It seems possible to relax with a happy effect. Digression from the main line of argument need not be wasteful. Even to explore a blind alley here and there may have its right and delightful place in the overall design. Above all, this type of artist will find it needful to remember that in such a well-policed state as the twelve-tone commonwealth everything 'irregular' has an added fascination, and that randomness and irrationality are at a premium, since once crowded out—unlike nature, which, it is said, invariably finds a way back—they are apt to stay out for good, which would be a pity.

There are alarming signs that the composition with twelve tones may become a Cause. Nothing could be more depressing. I hope I have not been unwittingly helping here to bring the dreadful thing about.



## THE STRANGE CASE OF SCHÖNBERG

### Revolutionary composer and tradition-abiding musician

. . . a dark  
 inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
 discordant elements . . .  
 —Wordsworth.

Things had always been comparatively simple with tradition-abiding composers and revolutionary musicians. Such were other key figures in the history of music, Beethoven, for example, or Debussy, or—to a lesser degree—Bach and Mozart. All of them had been somebody's, or some school's, rebellious disciples. They had to break away, the musician overruling the composer; and new techniques were evolved, a new form discovered, new paths (or new blind alleys) opened, and old pathos more subtly (or more perversely) expressed.

But Schönberg was nobody's disciple, and never was any composer so admirably self-taught. Just revisit one of his early works, e.g., *Verklärte Nacht*: like it or not, it is a masterpiece, a perfect summary of late, then modern, Romanticism, Wagner's giddy rhetorical sensuality and Brahms's ideal of dignified soliloquizing chamber-music wrapped into one. The late romantic, then modern, musician who wrote it had every reason to be satisfied. But not so the composer, who dreamed of pouring the old wine of tradition into new vessels, and at once made his dream come true. Yet he would never have indulged in such dreams and plans had not this tradition been a very exceptional and peculiar one. It was the romantic tradition of tradition-baiting.

Romantic symphonists are said to have been freer than fugue-writing classics. True, they no longer had to 'prepare their dissonances.' They were allowed all kinds of unaccountable chords. But they were free harmonists, not free composers; free grammarians, and fettered stylists. Or, rather, as composers they were bound to a paradoxical law of compulsory freedom; obliged to rebel, to be individualists, to 'express themselves' by means of original melody (obtained by distorting that of their predecessors), and to bring in more and more, and shriller, dissonance. And oddly enough they all agreed that the dramatic sonata form, as laid down in 'second period' Beethoven, had to be the conventional frame for anti-conventional expression. 'Romantic symphony', from Beethoven to Schönberg, is nothing more nor less than the principle of tonality and of development turned into psychology. Romantic music is a perpetual *sinfonia eroica*; development of the same clashing themes: tradition and

revolution, artist and philistine, genuine pathos and trite rhetorics. To embody their struggle the tonal cadence was at hand. The tension of dominant, leading note and dissonance—as in the bottled-up urgency of the diminished seventh—symbolizes the struggle; final relaxation upon the final Tonic means final victory. And as composer followed composer, the struggle, the tension and the dissonance became more momentous, the way from Tonic to Tonic longer. Until in Wagner's symphonic drama we find the symphonic symbols shaped into awe-inspiring totems: Wotan the Dominant, Isolde the Leading note. Dissonance stands for original sin and for the ordeal of life. Rhine and Nirvana are the Tonics of innocence at either end of a cadence four days long.

By the time Schönberg entered the scene, many musicians had already tried to react against the heroic treadmill of Romanticism. But only Debussy seemed to have understood that romantic overheated expression and romantic overwrought development, cadence and dissonance, were simply two aspects of the same phenomenon; and that, to get away from Isolde's philtre, one had to resort to the cooler draughts of Gregorian melody, unrelated fifths and triads, and non-developing static form. Cadences and leading notes are quite frequent in Debussy. But they imply no expressive or structural emphasis; and if an a-tonal style exists, i.e., musical architecture indifferent to tonality and dissonance, it is to be found in Debussy's anti-romantic music.

By Debussy and other non-Teutonic musicians the romantic dragon had been scotched. And perhaps it would have been killed, had not a topsy-turvy St. George flown to the rescue; Schönberg, who rejuvenated musical romanticism, as Loyola rejuvenated the Roman Church, by clinging with fanatical zeal to its purest elements and by abolishing abusive practices. He made away with the outrageous proportions of Wagnerian drama and late romantic symphony. The Dragon, after having degenerated into a Dinosaur, resumed the size of a quite presentable dragon, and in the case of *Pierrot Lunaire* even of a remarkably graceful one. Philosophical and literary pretensions were close-cut. And then came the refurbishing, with unprecedented thoroughness, of the musical essentials of Romanticism. Others had advocated the increase of tension. Schönberg radically suppressed relaxation, or, rather, relegated it to the silence preceding and following the music. Composers hitherto had been granted the obligation of using more and more dissonance. Schönberg changed this into interdiction of consonance. For consonance means relaxation; and, to the super-romantic, Schönbergian mind, the symphonic hero is the one that never relaxes. Tantalus is the patron of ascetics like Schönberg, and the twelve-tone row, with its corollaries, crab and inversion, the most ingenious device to insure that, throughout a whole coherent structure, the thirst of twelve unresolved 'mutually related' dominants, or leading notes, or appoggiaturas craving for tonal reference and resolution, shall remain unquenched.

Nothing is more astonishing than that this method of composition invented by Schönberg should have been mistaken by friend and foe for 'atonality,' for a new species of music intended or destined to supersede the old one. Alban Berg drew a parallel, much quoted since, between Bach and Schönberg: as Bach's

C major scale and cadence replaced the medieval modes, so Schönberg's twelve-tone relations would be the modern substitute for tonality. Given Alban Berg's intelligence and clear-sightedness, it seems difficult not to take this fantastic analogy for a piece of satire addressed to hero-worshippers and classifying historians. For, in the first place, Bach did not invent the tonal mode. The crudest amateurs had already for 200 years been fiddling, piping and whistling in C major. Secondly, his music has never been incomprehensible to anyone ignorant or oblivious of Gregorian melody; whereas, to an ear ignorant of consonance and tonality, Schönberg's avoidance of consonance would be as pointless as an Arabian tale about a flying carpet if the law of gravity did not commonly apply to carpets and other objects. This, by the way, disposes of the reproach of 'unnaturalness' again and again put forth to disparage Schönberg's music. His technique may well be defined as tonality distorted and perverted. But there is nothing fundamentally less natural about his patterns than about other 'wrong notes': Tristan's chromatic shimmerings, or even Scarlatti's acciaccaturas.

Neither is there anything fundamentally new about Schönberg's music, except in the technical field. Underneath the harmonic suspense, the traditional symphonic idiom, Wagnerian or Viennese, never fails to appear. Even waltz rhythm is rarely far away. Of Debussy's innovations, of Stravinsky's and Busoni's *trouvailles* Schönberg never took the slightest notice; and even Mahler, whom he greatly admired, had hardly any influence on him: at least, Mahler's most original handling of the material of music, his 'modern' distortion of melody, not by harmonic means but by the irony of strange baroque settings, remained outside Schönberg's scope. To describe him as a romantic traditionalist is an understatement. He was a romantic jingo and die-hard whom nothing but the quintessence of doctrine and the most uncompromising line of conduct would satisfy. The message conveyed by his super-expressive music is the old message. Untiringly it tells the old tale of the musician who has no religious or social community to write for, and is at loggerheads with the world. A new message, though, is added: the tale of the haunted, introvert composer, pursuing his receding and disintegrating material, crushed by his romantic heritage, and desperately trying to squeeze, by means of the twelve-tone machine, a last bitter drop of sincerity out of dried-up formulas and schemes. But this new tale of atomized sound and constructive fury, conspicuously told, over and over again, by the revolutionary composer, is only the old tale varied and prolonged.

But, old or new, it is a tale told by both Cassandra and the Pied Piper; and Schönberg's technique of tragic awareness, *Angst* and flight—the idiom of Berg's Kafkaesque charm and of Webern's deeply human glassy remoteness—is to-day the ghost in almost every composer's cupboard. Strange attempts to write hearty dodecaphonic *Gebrauchsmusik* are not uncommon, and twelve-tone themes make sudden appearances even where one had least expected to meet them—in Walton's violin and piano sonata, for example. Yet Schönberg himself, not long ago, had ventured that 'many a piece of good music remained to be written in C major'. And though his own endeavours in this respect do not



seem to have been particularly felicitous, he was again, in principle, irritatingly right. His system, being the limit of compulsory freedom, must ultimately defeat its own purpose. For if the non-resolving chord is the only legitimate one, and if the unexpected alone is allowed to happen, the moment will inevitably come when we shall have to overrule the system which makes us systematically expect the unexpected.

The perfect triad, however, will never sound the same after Schönberg. He will have added to its perfection a touch of fragility, and a touch of panic: one of the most extraordinary feats, indeed, achieved by any musician, since Pan's own day.

## ARNOLD SCHÖNBERG

*Karl Rankl*

On July the 13th, 1951, ended one of the most tragic lives ever endured by an artist. I say tragic because the lack of appreciation and success, indeed, the complete lack of comprehension of his work persecuted Arnold Schönberg all his life. The amount of nonsense written about his music is paralleled only by that written about Richard Wagner. I wonder how many people realize that the greatest musician of our time closed his eyes on that fateful day. It will probably be decades before the real significance of Schönberg as a composer is understood.

I met Schönberg in 1917 when I began studying harmony and counterpoint with him. It is difficult to describe the fantastic influence he had on a pupil's musical mind even after a few lessons. His clarity of speech, his incredible insight into the working machinery of the classical composers, his understanding and knowledge and analytical power were such that I have yet to encounter anything like them. With what awe-inspiring respect and enthusiasm he could talk about the music of Bach, Mozart and Beethoven!—and then five minutes later he could analyse a fugue by Bach or a movement of a Beethoven sonata with the detachment of a first-class craftsman, elucidating the smallest detail of its technique. There was no talk about colour or atmosphere or philosophy or Freudian subconsciousness. He was himself a great master who tried to tell his pupil whatever he knew about the craft of composition and about the craft of the old masters.

But Schönberg was above all a composer (in spite of the opinion of so many of his contemporaries). His work falls into three periods. The first is characterized by the easily discernible influences of Wagner and Brahms. It was quite natural that these two should influence him in his youth. Did they not also influence Strauss and Mahler, among others? What seems to escape most people, however, is the originality even at this time of Schönberg's melodic invention, the unique quality of his growing new technique of variation, his quite new approach to 'development sections,' and his rich and increasingly original harmony.

In his second period, with the first *Chamber Symphony*, *Pierrot Lunaire*, *Erwartung*, and *Die glückliche Hand*, Schönberg established himself as the great composer he was. He had found his own language and expression, his own technique, his very personal form of melody. Just look at a work like the first *Chamber Symphony*—what an abundance of new melodies! The exposition alone has six themes. In the development sections we can now admire Schönberg's outstanding technique of variation and counterpoint. And what a new world

# Die Jakobsleiter

(First version 1917)

Sehr rasch  $\text{♩} = 112$

Trumps [muted]  $\text{ff}$

Trombones [muted]  $\text{ff}$

Vcl.  $\text{ff}$

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

4 Tr.  $\text{ff}$

2 Tr.  $\text{ff}$

Ob.  $\text{ff}$

Cl.  $\text{ff}$

Bass.  $\text{ff}$

Vcl.  $\text{ff}$

Tuba  $\text{ff}$

2 Tr.  $\text{ff}$

(6) (7) (8)

Largo Military Drum  $\text{pp}$

*poco a poco cresc.*

we find in *Pierrot Lunaire* and *Erwartung*! Such music cannot be compared with anything written before. In these works, clearly pointing to his third period of twelve-tone music, we see the full measure of Schönberg's evolution in melody, harmony, and counterpoint.

It is the fashion to say that Schönberg was only a valuable ferment for others. If this means that no composer has escaped his influence in the last thirty years, one can certainly agree; but to call the many vulgarizations of Schönberg's ideas (whether twelve-tone or not) 'humanizing' his style, seems a



## Die Jakobsleiter

(Later version 1944)

October 21, 1944

Allegro [♩ = 112]

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Hn. 4 *fp* Hn. 2 *fp* Hn. 3 *fp* Cl. 3 *fp*

Vcl. *ff* *sf* *sf* *sf*

December 3, 44

poco a poco cresc.

(6) (7) (8)

Fl. 2 *f* Cl. 1 *mf* Cl. II *f* Fl. 2 *f*

cresc. poco a poco

Hn. 2 *pp* Hn. 4 *pp* Vcl. *pp* Bsn. I *pp*

sempre staccato

Vcl. Bsn. 1, 2, 3 & 4 C Bsn. C Ds. Ta. & 3 Cym. tremolo with the bow.

Trb. 2 *gliss.* Trb. 3 *gliss.*

Large Military Drum. *pp*

poco a poco cresc.

☒ Cymbal fixed on bass drum Tremolo with the bow of a Double Bass.

little unfair. His mind was that of a great genius, and no one can be surprised if it moved in different spheres from those of ordinary mortals.

There is one aspect of Schönberg's work that is well worth while to mention. With the exception of *Gurre-Lieder*, his choice of words to set to music was always one that was liable to impede rather than to promote a wider appeal. In the

third and fourth movements of his Second String Quartet, for example, he uses two poems by Stefan George. One can understand that he chose these poems for what he wanted to express; but, unfortunately, George is still far beyond the grasp of most people. The same applies to the sentiments expressed in that wonderful cycle of songs, *Die hängenden Gärten*; and one cannot call the subject of *Pierrot Lunaire* very popular. His pupil, Alban Berg, was much more fortunate in choosing *Wozzeck*; though it might interest some people to know that Schönberg disapproved of Berg's choice, and argued that music should deal 'rather with angels than with batmen.' Berg's *Wozzeck* has been a great success for the last twenty years; and no doubt ninety per cent of the success has been due to the excitement which the music adds to that powerful drama. Even so, one wonders how many people really understand the music itself? If they did, surely they would be able to understand the music of Schönberg's second period, from which Berg's—by no means less complicated—derives.

A fortnight before his death Schönberg still hoped to finish at least the first part of the composition of *Die Jakobsleiter*. He asked me to undertake the scoring of it. Alas, the work remained a torso. Schönberg had been working intermittently at it ever since 1917. Strange and uncanny was his fear of finishing this oratorio, because he thought it would be his last work. *Die Jakobsleiter*, of which I quote the first eight bars,<sup>1</sup> was not consistently in the twelve-tone system, although it was heading towards it. This proves that theory did not come before practice, but was evolved through years of experience. Schönberg did not mention a word about the twelve-tone theory, even to his most intimate pupils, before 1922. The first quotation was written in June, 1917. These bars clearly show the exposition of a twelve-tone scale, which is divided into two halves. One half is played by the 'cellos, who repeat the same six notes six times in the same succession; then these notes are taken over by the woodwind instruments. The other six notes are built up vertically, from the second bar onwards, and are played by brass and woodwind. In the second quotation, written in 1944, Schönberg has changed the 'cello part by varying the succession of the six notes, and has revised the scoring of the vertical section.

I would like to end by quoting the opening words of *Die Jakobsleiter*. They represent Schönberg's motto in life:

Whether right or left,  
Forwards or backwards,  
Uphill or downhill,  
We have to go on without asking  
What lies behind or ahead.  
It will remain hidden from you.  
You should, you must, forget it  
To fulfil your task.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 41 and 42.

## DOMENICO SCARLATTI'S HARMONY (2)

Ralph Kirkpatrick

(In the first part of this article, Ralph Kirkpatrick analyzed Scarlatti's harmony under the following headings: Consistency of style; Basic triads; Inversion and fundamental bass; Peculiarities of seventh chords; Cadential versus diatonic movement of harmony; Vertical harmonic intensities; Dropping and adding of voices, transposition of voices, harmonic ellipse, pedal points both real and understood; Harmonic superposition.)

*Contractions and extensions*

Scarlatti's technique of expanding or contracting a basic harmonic progression is most apparent in his cadential formulas. These cadential progressions may be large or small. The final sections of either half of a sonata consist of nothing else than a large reiterated cadence coloured by a variety of surface treatment. From a proportion embracing half or nearly half of a sonata, Scarlatti's cadences may be contracted to any degree. The large cadence may consist of repeated smaller cadences or may be protracted by enchainments or deceptive cadences that delay finality. The smaller cadences may be reduced to their basic IV, V, I, or they may be contracted still further, to the point where one harmony sounds on top of another. The opening chords of Venice I 28 (Longo 429) (Ex. 42) are simply contracted cadences, this time without preparation. (See also Venice XII 7, Longo 206, bars 35-37, etc.)

Ex 42 Venice I 28 (Longo 429)

[Allegro]

①

Longo's notes give the original for bars 2-6, but not that of bar 1.

As given by Longo

This contraction of cadential formulas is one of Scarlatti's chief methods of varying the harmonic movement within a piece. The cadences may be broad and expanded at the ends of the piece; their elements may be contracted and blurred



in the middle, in the modulatory passages, or rendered subservient to harmonies produced by diatonic motion. When Scarlatti speeds up his cadences, their elements may be so crowded one upon another that they merge into a so-called acciacatura as the blades of a rapidly revolving propeller merge into a blur. In Venice XV 22 (Longo 415) elements from all three of the cadential chords clash into a dissonant tangle in the middle of the piece, only to emerge, at the ends, clear, open, and separate. (In this piece the rhythm expands into quavers for the contracted cadences, and accelerates at the end into semiquavers as the cadences expand.) See Venice XI 13 (Longo 118) in F major for a series of cadences, G to C, that occupy all but the first ten bars out of the thirty-four that comprise the first half of the sonata. The corresponding cadence, C to F, occupies bars 50 to 76 of the second half. The remainder of the sonata is entirely made up of smaller modulatory cadences, which Scarlatti miraculously manages in such a way as to form a continuous and sustained piece.

Most common of all Scarlatti's superpositions or contractions is the merging of a hovering subdominant and dominant, as in Venice XV 8 (Longo 204), by continuing simultaneous pedals drawn from the fifths of both chords (see Ex. 30). The same process of contraction is clearly visible in Venice XV 6 (Longo 465), where consecutive fifths (explained by the subsequent contraction) of subdominant and dominant first sound separately, then merge into a passage the end of which has been 'corrected' by Longo, because Scarlatti puts a Neapolitan sixth into the top voice and thus brings a B flat against the pedal point of the B natural (bar 68) (Ex. 43).

Ex 43 Venice XV 6 (Longo 465)

Allegro

(61)

In both the Venice & Parma Mss. a tie is marked on the corresponding passage of our 59, but not here.

This slur omitted in the Parma Ms.

(67)

given in Venice Ms. but doubtless a copyist's error

Scarlatti's contractions or superpositions of cadential elements, whether of IV, V, or of IV, V, I generally occur when he wishes to avoid finality, either in order not to interrupt continuity or in order not to establish a definitive tonal orientation at the wrong point in the piece. For example, in Venice III 11 (Longo

273), at bars 93-94, Scarlatti does not want his cadences too strong (Ex. 44). As a closing dominant, B major must be established with a feeling of suspense; it must not come to rest like a tonic. (No greater mistake can be made in performance than to relax the intensity of these cadences that establish the definitive dominant just before it leads into the closing tonality.) At bars 90 to 93, rather than state a clear E major subdominant of B, he blurs the cadence by sounding elements of this harmony in the second beat together with the F sharp major dominant of B.

Ex. 44 Venice III 11 (Longo 273)



(No ornaments are to be found in bar 92 of the Parma Ms.)

In the same sonata, bars 22-27, we find contractions of two Phrygian cadences, concealed by omissions, inversions, and superpositions, namely IV and V of B, and IV and V of E, that hover back and forth to produce a total ambiguity between tonic and dominant midway through the first half of the sonata (Ex. 45).

Ex. 45 Venice II 1 (Longo 273)



\* Ornaments given in Parma Ms. only.

As we have already seen, a large number of Scarlatti acciaccaturas are formed by the compression of cadences. This process accounts for the startling dissonances of the thrice repeated phrase that opens the excursion of Venice III 10 (Longo 323). They are so startling that Longo 'corrects' them (Ex. 46). The whole tone rise

Ex. 46 Venice III 10 (Longo 323), (Original given in concluding foot-note by Longo)



\* This chord is so given by Longo, etc.

of each repetition of the phrase is not formed by transposition, by bodily displacing the tonality for an instant, as first appears to be the case in other such passages in Scarlatti or in similar passages in Beethoven. There is a perfectly smooth enchainment of related tonalities by cadences, except that some of the steps are compressed and others are omitted. The first statement of the phrase forms a cadence in F sharp (double dominant of E major), but the resolution to F sharp is omitted. The second statement of the phrase begins in the relative minor of F sharp (D sharp or E flat), altered to major as the dominant of G sharp or A flat. By a similar process we arrive at F or E sharp to begin the third statement of the phrase. This leads to D flat or C sharp, and the following passage moves back through F sharp to the dominant B.

Let us analyse the first statement of the phrase in F sharp (bars 42-45) to see the origin of the dissonances 'corrected' by Longo. First we must begin with the assumption that dominant and tonic are continually shifting from major to minor, or left ambiguous. The first bar (bar 42) gives the clue to the compressions of the whole passage.

- First beat: C sharp (V)
- Second beat: C sharp, B (minor) (V, IV)
- Third beat: C sharp, F sharp minor, G sharp major (V, IV minor of V, V of V)

In other words we have first C sharp alone, then a compressed Phrygian cadence in C sharp major, then a compressed full cadence in a C sharp minor which immediately alters to C sharp major as a dominant of F sharp (bar 45).

### *Longo's 'Corrections' and Scarlatti's intentions*

Nothing shows better the originality of Scarlatti's harmony and its lack of correspondence with orthodox notions, than Longo's 'corrections' or the complete rewriting of some of the sonatas by Hans von Bülow. The alterations of Scarlatti's text are highly literate in both cases, but they rest on a widespread misconception of his style, on a failure to recognize that he had invented a consistent system of harmonic treatment unlike that of any other composer of the eighteenth century.

It is surprising that a musician of such sensibility and experience as Longo felt called upon to make so many emendations, whether or not he was in sympathy with Scarlatti's harmonic vocabulary. For it is perfectly clear that these peculiarities of Scarlatti are intentional and are an integral part of his style. Immediately following nearly every one of these 'corrections' is a passage that defies alteration, that exposes the inconsistency of the 'correction' and the complete impossibility of restating Scarlatti in terms of conventional harmony. See, for example, Longo's unsuccessful 'correction' of the parallel octaves between soprano and bass in Venice II 23 (Longo 178), bars 1-8, as compared with bars 9-16 in which Scarlatti makes it clear by repeating the diatonic progression of the bass that he so intended it in the first place.

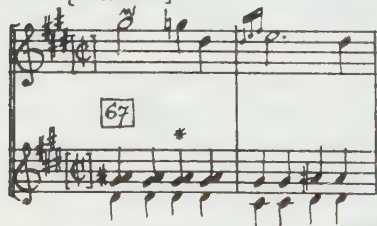


Except for questions of copyist's slips and inconsistencies in the manuscript sources, almost all of Longo's emendations are unnecessary, and in no way as logical as he believed them to be. The proof of their illogicality lies in the overwhelming number of similar passages which he was obliged to leave 'uncorrected' because of their utterly organic incorporation in the piece. Besides being more receptive to dissonance, the twentieth-century musician is better equipped to understand those devices of internal pedals, transposition of voices, harmonic superposition and contraction which explain every single passage that seemed illogical and arbitrary to Longo and his contemporaries.

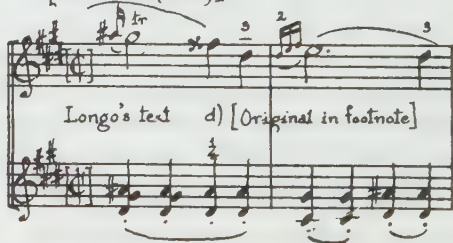
One must admit, however, that Scarlatti's frequent dropping of voices seems less logical. Perhaps only the experienced continuo player and harpsichordist is prepared to understand it. Throughout the history of thoroughbass it was the privilege of the continuo player to achieve gradations in the harpsichord's relatively inflexible level of sound by filling up or thinning out the chordal realization of the figured bass. A very great discrepancy exists between a continuo realization that looks well on paper and one that sounds well in performance, that supports the solo parts without obtruding, moulds a flexible background, and achieves a genuine sensitiveness of ensemble. As long as the basic continuity is preserved, as long as a convincing and well-conducted line is added to the bass, and as long as the essential rhythmic structure is supported, almost endless liberties can be taken, even to the occasional introduction of doubling consecutives in the inner parts.

With consummate skill Scarlatti shapes his phrases to the nuances of vocal expression, as in Venice III 1 (Longo 257). (Ex. 47). At bars 67-68 he allows the

Ex 47 [Andante]



[Andante (d. 56)]



voice to breathe and to shade its plaint into a pianissimo by slackening for a moment the component chords of his acciaccatura accompaniment into consecutive fifths of subdominant and dominant. Not only are Longo's suggested 'corrections' of this passage unsuccessful in that they reduce Scarlatti's harmonies to conventional propriety, but his phrasings elsewhere betray a complete misunderstanding of the declamation of the voice part.

See Venice XII 25 (Longo 19), bars 7-15, for a series of useless fillings of chords that reduce Scarlatti's taperings of phrase ends and his shadings of colour to a heavy uniformity (Ex. 48).

Ex. 48 Venice XII 25 [Longo 19]

[Allegro]

If ever Longo's corrections failed to render a strange piece less strange to conventional ears, it is in the third sonata of Venice III (Longo 238).<sup>1</sup> Even the experienced connoisseur of Scarlatti might for a moment be puzzled by the apparent carelessness with which the principal voice outlines a completely different harmony from that of the accompaniment, by the tendency of the accompaniment itself to dissolve into octaves, to move parallel with the main voice, and to leave dissonances apparently hanging in mid-air with no hope of resolution.

Actually, if we look again at the accompaniment of this piece, we shall see that the basses move simply and conventionally. The notes of the middle voice or voices are added or subtracted only to shape the declamatory nuance of the phrase. In every case where the dissonances represent genuine suspensions they are resolved correctly. The other unresolved dissonances do not require resolution, in Scarlatti's terms, because they represent superpositions of the tonic, subdominant or dominant harmony on which every chord in the piece is based. This piece is a perfect example of the way in which Scarlatti's harmonies do not move in conventional terms of horizontal part-writing above their basses; they are merely degrees in the tonal

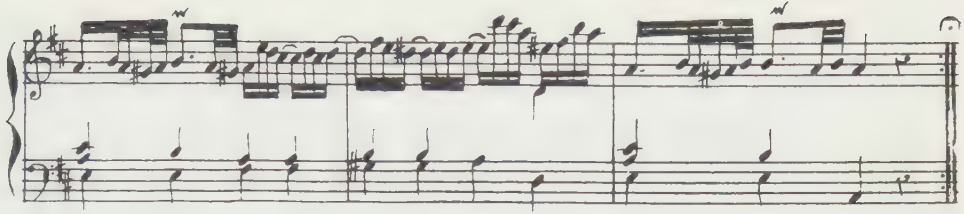
<sup>1</sup> See p. 50.

## Venice III, [Longo 238]

*Ad e Cantabile.*

*Tremolo*





scale. The upper voice in this piece curls its tendrils of arpeggiations, appoggiaturas, changing notes and *échappes* around the harmony of several voices, but never consistently. It does not describe them; it merely indicates them in the way that a single line drawing can indicate several dimensions of space. The bizarre intervals of this voice-line weave themselves around imaginary sustained notes, pedal points and transpositions of octave. The bass line forms the simple undecorated connective from one harmony to the next. In the upper parts harmonic functions can be shifted from one voice to another. In this loose, free style it makes little difference how many parallel fifths and octaves occur between the upper and lower parts. They do not undermine the structure any more than the freedoms of an artist's pen sketch necessarily indicate an ignorance of anatomy.

Startling as it seems at first, this piece is based on perfectly conventional eighteenth-century harmony. Only its treatment is unconventional. It resembles a written-out *tempo rubato* in a harmonic sense. It parallels the conscious intent of a weaver or dyer to let certain strands of colour stray from their pattern, loosely, and apparently at random. A spot of colour may be lengthened into a stripe, a thread exposed longer than it is actually needed, giving the texture an air of nonchalance and irregularity.

For all his lack of pedantry Scarlatti is fundamentally consistent. But he invariably writes for the ear and not for the eye. What on paper may seem an unjustifiable thickening of texture or an omission of an apparently essential resolution always turns out to have its reasons in harpsichord sound.

## EDMUND HORACE FELLOWES

By the death of Dr. Fellowes we have lost a scholar who was not only a great leader of English musical research but also the creator, through that research, of a musical movement which has had a far-reaching influence on the cultural life of our country. It was in 1913 that he first began to publish the complete corpus of English madrigals which eventually amounted to thirty-six volumes. While Minor Canon and Precentor at Bristol Cathedral he had begun to realize that at that time there were very few madrigals available in modern editions and that those editions were mostly far from accurate. He was appointed Minor Canon of St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle, in 1900, and being then within easy reach of the British Museum he set himself to score all the madrigals that he could find from the original part-books. He was not the first scholar to make this attempt; G. E. P. Arkwright had already reprinted a few, but Arkwright was interested in many other antiquarian aspects of English music and made no attempt to produce more than a very general anthology. His reprints never had a very wide circulation.

Fellowes was first led towards musical research by Stainer, who in his undergraduate days had been Professor of Music at Oxford. Stainer—so Fellowes often recalled—used to say with humorous regret that he feared he would be remembered after his death only as the composer of a quantity of sugary church music. 'The High Church movement came along and demanded it, so I had to provide it.' He had no illusions about its artistic value, scholarly though it was in craftsmanship. Stainer's real work, which he feared would be forgotten, though it lay nearest to his heart, was the investigation of the medieval musical manuscripts in the Bodleian Library. In this subject he was indeed a pioneer, and, although in later years medieval studies became the peculiar province of the Germans, Johannes Wolf, the original teacher of all the German medievalists, was always ready to pay honourable tribute to the scholarship of Stainer. Stainer approached the Middle Ages as a practical musician of wide culture, not as a pedant or a liturgiologist, and he was as much interested in the secular music as in the sacred. Fellowes followed his example; in later years he became a leading authority on Tudor church music, but he began his studies on the music which was composed for human enjoyment. He studied the poetry of the madrigals no less than the music, realizing from the first that in England as in Italy the madrigal was fundamentally based on the expression of words.

The habit of madrigal singing, even if confined to small private groups, seems never to have died out from the sixteenth century to the present day, but Fellowes soon found that the established madrigal societies had little understanding of the true interpretation of what they sang. He encountered a good deal of resentment from the older generation who claimed to possess 'the authentic tradition.'

Fellowes had no respect for traditions and based his interpretations on pure scholarship. He was not one of those scholars who are content to reprint ancient documents and leave them on the shelves of a library; to him the madrigals were live music, as much alive to-day as in the days of Queen Elizabeth. He trained new groups of younger singers, notably the original 'English Singers' founded by Cuthbert Kelly along with Steuart Wilson and Clive Carey, who had already had some experience of madrigal-singing in a private circle at Cambridge. He broke down the tyranny of the bar-line, a tyranny which even now requires to be combated, as we can hear at a good many public performances. The single items of the thirty-six volumes were gradually issued separately, and the accomplished performances of the English Singers set the example for madrigal groups all over the country. The English Singers gave concerts in Berlin, Prague and Vienna, where English madrigals were something quite unknown; at Berlin they received, as a German critic said, the sort of ovation reserved for artists like Kreisler, and at Prague the leader of the famous Bohemian Quartet said that their ensemble was like first-class quartet-playing—a criticism not so surprising to those who knew that Fellowes was himself an accomplished violinist and a devoted quartet player. Madrigal groups were formed in Germany and English madrigals published in German translations. It is fairly safe to say that the cult of the madrigal initiated by Fellowes in England contributed a good deal to the encouragement of madrigal-singing in Italy as well, and also to the publication of the madrigals of Marenzio under the editorship of Dr. Alfred Einstein and more recent reprints of madrigals by Italian scholars.

Thanks to Fellowes the English madrigal has by now become a vital national possession; it is no longer an antiquarian oddity but an integral part of our living musical experience. Nor has it been left exclusively to the professional ensembles which have been organized from time to time on the model of the original English Singers; the madrigals were composed for amateurs and by amateurs they are being constantly sung, though probably few groups attain the supremely accomplished and intellectually sensitive standard of the Cambridge University Madrigal Society which has flourished for many years under the scholarly direction of Mr. Boris Ord. A result which Fellowes could never have foreseen has been the penetrating influence of the madrigal on the younger generation of English composers. This has probably been due largely to the contrapuntal teaching of the late R. O. Morris, but Morris would never have been able to evolve his own methods without the basis of Fellowes's reprints to study himself.

During the twelve years that were occupied by the gradual issue of the complete Madrigal School, Fellowes took up the study of the Lutenist Songwriters and published several volumes of them in a scholarly edition based on a careful transcription of the original lute tablatures. The poems of these songs had already attracted the attention of literary critics, and their reprints led to a few modern transcriptions of the music, but often very freely arranged for concert purposes. Fellowes never abandoned his strict principles of exact scholarship; he learned to play the lute himself and thereby grasped the true relation of its accompaniments to the vocal line. The publication of the lute songs was a revelation to the musical world,



although here again Arkwright had already had a taste of their quality. But Arkwright was a man of excessive modesty and of a singularly retiring disposition; he printed the fruits of his research from time to time, generally at his own expense in small editions, but made no effort to get them performed. Fellowes felt that he was a man with a mission. He probably did more research work than anyone else on the committee which published the ten volumes of Tudor Church Music, a collection still incomplete; but there was no such national response to this collection of pre-Reformation church music as there was to the madrigals, and it was mainly on the initiative of Fellowes that a small selection of works was issued in a form suitable for practical use. It was only a year or two ago that Fellowes planned a representative anthology of English church music on gramophone records, sung by various cathedral and collegiate choirs.

Respected for his erudition by scholars both abroad and at home, beloved for his humanity by all who came into personal contact with him, Fellowes received no rewards from the Church which he served for nearly sixty years. At the age of sixty-eight he was given an honorary degree at Oxford. But Fellowes cared for none of these things; he lived for his friends, for scholarship and for music. His reward is the gratitude of everyone who sings in or even listens to an English madrigal.

*Since singing is so good a thing,  
I wish all men would learn to sing.*

EDWARD J. DENT.

## THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

In the confused and contradictory pattern of forces that represents this century's creative effort in music no general direction of progress is as yet discernible. The necessity of discovering new methods of tonal organization and the attempt either to derive these from the older system or to graft them on to it seem to have resulted in a forceful disintegration in which powerful movements of equal strength but diverse orientation have been set up. We must remember, however, that we in 1952 are not witnessing the fact of this violent disruption: we are experiencing its results. The nuclear fission of music (if we may describe it so) was accomplished before the War of 1914-18; and in the years that have passed since then many considerable figures have contrived to ride out the storm, though some have not escaped the cross-currents and have been blown this way and that by its diverse forces.

Two major figures recognizably emerge, so important in their own work and in their impact upon their lesser fellows as to encourage the belief that creative thought in music may now be clearly presented with no more than two main roads to the future, though it seems likely that these roads are diametrically opposed in direction and one may be found to be a dead end after all.

The moment of fission arrives when Wagnerian chromaticism becomes sharpened and ellipticized to the point of atonality. At this moment one of the great motivating forces in music—that of modulation—disappears. There are only two ways of compensating for its loss. Either we must accept the situation and endeavour to formulate new conventions that will exercise as powerful a propellent impulse as that which has gone, or we must seek to re-state the older conventions in a way that will permit the fruitful development of the art without invalidating the earlier canon. Schönberg took the first way, seeking first to reorganize his twelve semitones in a single chord of superimposed fourths, and later formulating his twelve-tone system of composition. His work continues Wagner's and seems an extremely logical solution of the atonal problem inherent in the Wagnerian chromatic method. Stravinsky took the second way and (necessarily by-passing the whole romantic movement in music) bases his present method upon the significance attaching to certain musical formulæ in pre-nineteenth century practice.

Stravinsky's neo-classical method has been attacked because to some it has seemed to represent too conscious, too intellectual, a solution of the problem. But Schönberg's was, for all its romanticism, no less an intellectual solution. At first thought it may seem that Schönberg is more firmly rooted in tradition since his earlier music is obviously an extension of the Wagnerian harmonic idiom. But I believe the opposite to be true. The validity, the significance of Stravinsky's music derives from its use of classical devices and their traditional associations. Schönberg's twelve-tone method has dispensed with the devices and therefore with their associations. In his later work practically the only links with the past are the tempered scale and some canonic forms.

In the year of Schönberg's death, Stravinsky produces the most considerable work yet achieved in the neo-classical style, his first full-length piece for the theatre. It was remarked, after the *première* of *The Rake's Progress*, that he had 'set back music thirty years'. It is difficult to attach any meaning to the observation. Had the critic quintupled his estimate, some fruitful discussion might have emerged. For there is no doubt that the composer has sought his formulæ in the classical practice of the eighteenth century. He has 'returned to old times', as Verdi recommended in a phrase that Stravinsky has quoted with approval. There is nothing very unexpected in this. Stravinsky has been writing neo-classical music for the past thirty years. What is more surprising is that this time he seems to have won professional critical approval, to have aroused an immediate and warm response such as he has not enjoyed since his early work with Diaghileff. For many years his music has, at best, received only tepid approval from all save a handful of enlightened critics. Is there any element in the score of *The Rake's Progress* absent from the earlier works in classical idiom?

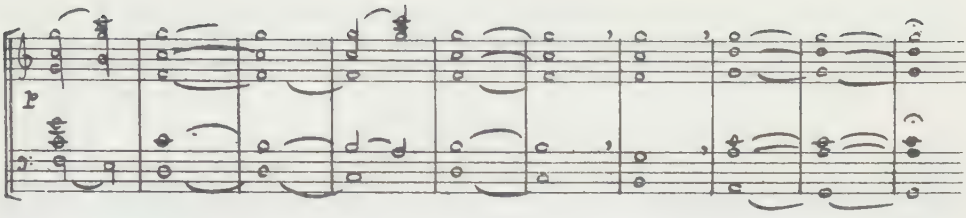
I think there is. The first performance of the new opera impressed its audience immediately by a quality of geniality, of grace, not strongly discerned in any Stravinsky score since the exquisite *Persephone* of 1934. There has not been much humour in Stravinsky's music: often he has seemed to be sternly wrestling with his material. A wry smile is the most that he has permitted himself. But this becomes increasingly less true of the works written since *Apollon Musagète*. In that ballet there were some movements of almost Delibes-like charm. In parts of the *Capriccio* likewise, and in the *Duo Concertant*. Perhaps it was the French text and the grace of the legend that helped to inform *Persephone* with its peculiar radiance. *Jeu de Cartes* had its moments of gaiety not unlike those of Rossini; *Orpheus* had many passages of quiet and classic charm. A sterner mood prevailed throughout the Symphonies of 1940 and 1945, and charm would not have been an expected element in the 1948 setting of the Mass. But *The Rake's Progress* is full of it, and if one had to refer to an earlier composer the more accurately to define this elusive element, the name of Mozart would not be far from one's thoughts.

There is no doubt that the eighteenth-century setting of the story has strongly appealed to Stravinsky. Violently opposed as he is to the illustrative element in music or the naturalistic manner on the stage, the musical formality and the operatic artifice of two hundred years ago find in him a modern champion. So his opera is composed of set arias (duets, cavatinas, etc.), and recitative (both *secco* and accompanied). To show that the stage is a stage, and not a room with an invisible fourth wall, there is an epilogue in which the principal characters appear without wigs and address the audience. (A similar device was employed in *Renard*, and the Reader in *L'Histoire du Soldat* serves as a link between the 'true' of the stage and 'true' of real life.) The clichés and conventions of eighteenth-century operatic music are freely employed, but so cleverly (as in their frequent telescoping) that they appear to us with something of their earlier freshness. Quite clearly the validity of all Stravinsky's procedure derives from the past, but in refurbishing traditional elements he has made them usable again by composers of the present day and of the future. He is one of the few composers living who can write a common chord and make it significant. A Dominant 7th in his music appears as a fresh and exciting sound, not (as it did thirty years ago) as a tame and somewhat tired, overworked discord. Practically every important recitative in *The Rake's Progress* begins with a first inversion—a bit of conventional artifice that one found curiously refreshing and appealing at the first performance.

I have referred to Stravinsky's 'telescoping' of classical elements. This consists very largely of the simultaneous employment of tonic and dominant harmonies. This is, of course, only a part of the neo-classical method, but it is a most important part. The device is effective in so far as the separate harmonies are perceived with their traditional associations (as in Beethoven's Sonata in E flat, Op. 81a), and many different examples are to be found in the score of *The Rake's Progress*.



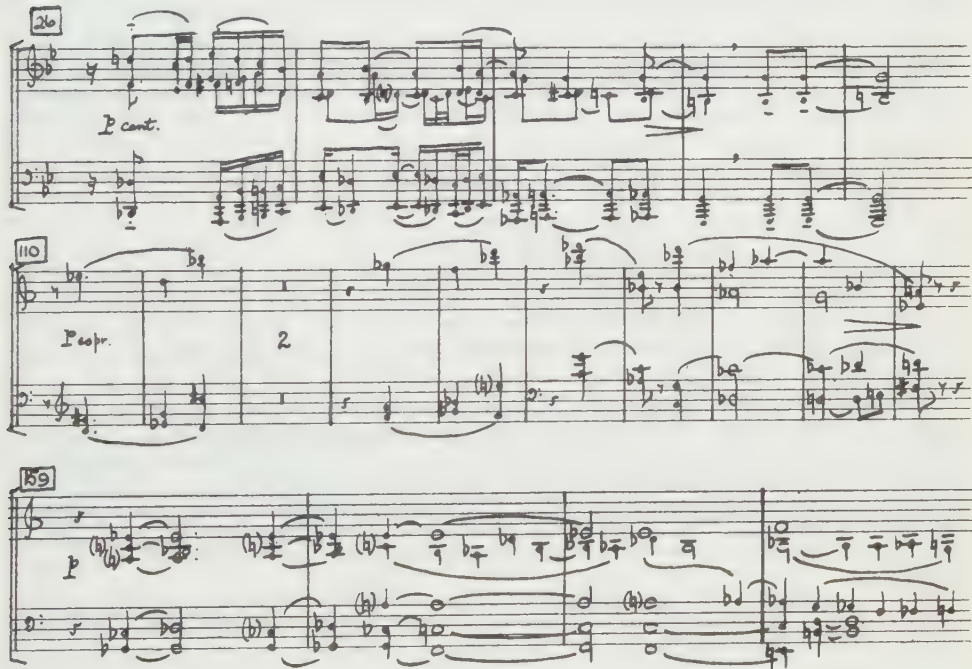




The first example shows an empty bickering of tonic and dominant chords, appropriate to the brothel scene it accompanies. The second shows a vigorous and bracing tangling of the two elements in the finale of a crowd scene. The third extract comes from the scene in Bedlam and is heard at a moment of extreme pathos in the story.

It would not be right, however, to suppose that all the harmonic procedures are as easily traced back to their classical roots. Some of the progressions are, it would seem, frankly empirical: others are justified by a free movement of contrapuntal parts.

In the empirical discovery of new chords and resolutions Stravinsky shows a deep and even tender sensibility. Such progressions as the following are new, are simple, and are (if the composer will permit) infinitely moving.



The vocal line throughout is splendidly and unashamedly Italianate. Wide-sweeping melodies of great power and beauty abound. No one who heard the first performance, will soon forget the magnificent *cabaletta* for Anne that closes the first Act. In the recitatives the line is supple and always very singable. But it is in the prose of the recitatives that Stravinsky has apparently been cramped to some extent by the prosody of the English language. The formal arias take false quantities in their stride, the sweep of the melody compensating for any missetting of the poetry. Luckily it is easier to compensate for faulty accentuations in the free

rhythm of a recitative; but it must be confessed that odd things occur throughout the opera, and that performance may come more easily to artists who are singing the English as a foreign language than to those for whom it is their mother tongue. Three examples must suffice.

2  
The woods are green and bird and beast at play.

120  
By feint and am-bush the day to gain.

254  
Sent. ly, little boat, Across the ocean float. The crystal waves, dividing: The sun in the west Is go - ing to rest;

It cannot truly be said that these settings are grossly at fault, but it is unlikely that any composer born to the English tongue would treat the three phrases in such a way.

The text itself seems something of a hotch-potch. Phrases of memorable beauty occur with lines of near-doggerel, sometimes appropriate to the situation, sometimes very far from appropriate. At a moment of great tension, just before Tom's death, it is surely unacceptable to be told (*tranquillo ma risoluto*):

Every wearied body must  
Late or soon return to dust.

In this earthly city we  
Shall not meet again, love, yet  
Never think that I forget.

The combination of the sentiments of *Hymns, Ancient and Modern* with the poetry of the Charing Cross Road certainly will not compass such a scene as is presented upon the stage at this moment.

So much for detail. Viewed at a little distance, *The Rake's Progress* appears to be a very great and important work. The balance of rhythmic movement in the score, the sequence of tonalities, the proportions of aria, chorus and recitative appear to be supremely well judged. The work has been presented to the world at a *première* of unusual brilliance, and already that first presentation has taken on some of the quality of an historic occasion. Has Stravinsky succeeded in regaining the position in the musical hierarchy which he deserved and was freely accorded in his youth? It would seem so. And he deserves it no less than he did in those earlier days.

HERBERT MURRILL.

## BILLY BUDD

### I

Britten's music is noteworthy for three things: sensitive setting of words to individual melodies, an acute sense of 'atmosphere,' and a varied and original orchestral technique second to that of no other composer in this country. Yet, while admiring the technical virtuosity of his work in general it is difficult to avoid the opinion that *Billy Budd* shows a decline in quality.

Vocal melody is one of the chief elements in opera, and melodic invention has hitherto been Britten's strongest accomplishment. Lacking as he does the gift of inventing truly contrapuntal melodies, nearly all his work, and certainly all his best work, consists of tunes and accompaniments. This, of course, is no drawback to opera: Rossini and Verdi write page after page in this manner and are no less good on that account. But this method of composition demands memorable melodies, and here admirers of *Peter Grimes*, the *Serenade*, the two Sonnet cycles and the *Spring Symphony* must pause, for *Billy Budd* is almost totally deficient in such melodies. Except for some of the choral episodes, and Billy's solo in Act IV, the vocal line is a mixture of semi-arioso and recitative which treats the text delicately but is in itself undistinguished. Moreover, the majority of the melodic sentences, whether in arioso, recitative, or chorus, are constructed on the same general plan, AABA, in which the second phrase is either sequentially or exactly a repetition of the first. A sound structure, and one used for centuries, but when so much in a long work has the same method of organization, the listener wonders what has happened to the composer's invention. Deriving from this structural similarity is the irritating mannerism of repeating short phrases, often with no dramatic justification. The repetitions at a higher pitch, where they do not suggest the eighteenth-century *rosalia*, are at best weaknesses; the repetitions at a lower pitch lapse all too often into sentimentality.

Compared with the excellent sea-shanties of Act II, some of the tunes are downright banal: it is hard to believe that Britten could have written the melody for 'This is our Moment', in Act III. Even the 'lullaby' in Act IV owes most of its striking effect to the fact that it comes just after the aridities of the trial scene, for in itself it is not very original, suggesting rather the pathetic drawing-room ballad of our grandfathers than the musings of condemned innocence. The chief defect of the melodies, however, lies in their stylistic similarity: the characters are not sufficiently contrasted and do not develop musically, for they sing the same kind of music in the last two acts as in the first.

The harmonies again are restricted, and far less flexible than in *Peter Grimes*. The main chords are a triad with both a major and a minor third, or a major triad with an alternative root a semitone higher. These are frequently used to produce polytonality, and are often maintained for pages at a time in reiterated rhythms. It is in this way that the monotony of naval life is suggested, and the harmonies undoubtedly make for unity; but the movement from chord to chord is generally disjointed and produces a very disconnected passage at the end of Act III. Here 34 major and minor triads succeed one another without interruption, their only connexion being that they all include F, A, or C, the three notes forming the tonic chord of Billy's 'lullaby' which follows. There is no musical reason for this passage to sound logical: some like it, some don't, and that is all that can be said. In several places, Britten uses an *ostinato* to give the harmonies coherence, but with no more success than Holst with whom it was such a favourite device.



The orchestration evokes brilliantly the life at sea, and is the most satisfying characteristic of the work. It is remarkable also how the limitation of having only male voices is counteracted by subtle use of the upper reaches of the audible scale, as well as by the femininity of the music written for the part of Captain Vere. On the other hand, the saxophone solo with its descending sequential melody makes the scene of the flogged novice not heart-breaking but unpleasantly sentimental. An instrument still so closely associated with the sham contrition of such popular lyrics as 'Don' want to hurt you, Baby', cannot give authentic expression to a situation of this kind.

How far does the libretto contribute to the failure of *Billy Budd*? At Covent Garden, as well as in listening over the radio and in studying the score, I found this question predominating. Yet it must be remembered that Britten was working in close collaboration with his librettists, and since this is his sixth opera we may assume that he knew what he wanted and that his wishes were respected.

The choice of Melville's story was a challenge to the librettists. Not only is it a stirring tale; it is also deeply symbolical of problems of good and evil, reflecting the macrocosm in the microcosm of the ship. The scenario follows the main events of the book closely, making at the same time many justifiable short cuts. A good example is the transference of Claggart's eulogy of Billy ('Handsomely done, my lad') from a soup-spilling accident to a fight below decks. Against this, however, the librettists have yielded to the temptation of adding unnecessary episodes in order to give the composer opportunities for display. One instance of this is the salute of Captain Vere by the ship's company in Act I; another is the long interlude of abortive attack on a French ship which interrupts Claggart's accusation of Billy to Vere in Act III.

In the book, the tale is continually commented upon by the author speaking in the first person, and from these comments come the pointing of the allegory and the elaboration of the symbolism. The librettists are clearly anxious that the opera should preserve this character, and so a heavy load of moralizing is laid on Captain Vere. His, too, is the task of expounding the 'inner meaning' of the plot, for which librettists and composer have created a prologue and epilogue in which Vere recalls the story as an old man. This hardly justifies itself in a dramatic sense, and it is only fair to Melville to say that in the book it could not happen as Vere dies in action a few days after Billy's execution. Of course, any librettist or composer can take liberties with his plot, but while some of the difficulties and insufficiencies are due to Melville, this at least is not.

The character of Claggart, the evil master-at-arms, is slightly unconvincing in the book. His 'natural depravity' is hinted at, rather than directly portrayed. In the opera, he is made to say, 'O beauty, O handsomeness, would that I never encountered you. Would that I lived in my own world always, in that depravity to which I was born'. This hardly convinces the listener of his hatred, nor is conviction deepened by his subsequent words: 'Having seen you, what choice remains to me? . . . I am doomed to annihilate you.' Across the mainly Christian interpretation of the allegory, the librettists have thrust the notion of Fate, and as a result of this confusion the actions of the characters have insufficient basis.

Melville explicitly states that the 'spiritual sphere was wholly obscure to Billy's thoughts', and adds that after the last interview with Vere Billy did not speak again save with the chaplain and in the final salutation. In the libretto for Act IV, however, Billy talks glibly about Fate: 'I had to strike down that Jemmy-legs, it's fate. And Captain Vere has had to strike me down, fate.' Vere says in the epilogue that he could have saved Billy, and yet he didn't. The result of this nonsense is the failure of the plot as a human drama. Each character moves on his own tram-line of fate, destined for a collision in the third Act; as a spectacle, it is not without some pathetic interest, but it can hardly be called tragic.

In several places the symbolism is watered down with sentimentalism. If we compare the use of Melville's own lines in Act IV with the additions of the librettists, the contrast is damning. Melville's lines are:

'But no! It is dead then I'll be, come to think  
 They'll lash me in hammock, drop me deep,  
 Fathoms down, fathoms—how I'll dream fast asleep.'

But the Crozier-Forster Billy has to add:

'Don't matter now. I'm strong, and I know it, and I'll stay strong, and that's enough.' D. S. Savage in his study of Forster's novels in *The Withered Branch* (p. 63) notes the same fault: 'Forster's work suffers artistically as the result of the confusion between the symbolical and realistic treatment of his subject.' And when Vere says in the epilogue that Billy has 'saved' him, we can only ask: 'Saved how, from what, and for what?' If 'salvation' in the Christian sense is meant, 'Fate' becomes meaningless. 'I hold', said King Alfred, 'as do all Christian men, that it is Divine Providence that rules, and not fate.'

With characters that are almost puppets, *Billy Budd* is not *dramma per musica*, as Monteverdi defined opera; the music is mainly illustrative, like film music, and sometimes very good of its kind. But in general the stage action is far more compelling than the music, and often carries the music along by its speed and bustle. Allegory and symbolism serve only to sentimentalize the inadequate conception, and were this a fault appearing in only one Britten opera it might be passed over in silence, but it appears in all. Only in *The Little Sweep* has he made his characters live in the music; and here no larger issues are involved. Good as *Peter Grimes* is, it fails on this count; *Lucretia* is too abstract to convince; *Albert Herring* seems to be mere frolic without humanity. In fact, Britten has never reached the human heart in his operatic characters, and all his attempts to cover his failure with 'religious' symbolism show that up to now he has been unable to tackle the eternal problem of Good and Evil either. *Billy Budd* sets out to portray one intensely evil man, his 'divinely innocent' victim, and an heroic man striving to equate the civil and divine laws. Yet these characters are not good or evil (they haven't the strength to be either) but only nice or nasty.

ANTHONY MILNER.

## II

When you are preparing the performance of an important piece, old or new, there seems to be no time or occasion to form an opinion of it. The obvious task is to study it, to imagine what effects are wanted and how to try to get them, and to work your way back into the mind of the composer, so that you may find out, as far as possible, how it all started and what made him write it down. Provided, of course, that you feel, on your first contact with the score, that the proposition attracts you, and that it creates in you that exciting sensation which some horses are said to experience at the sound of a trumpet. Then there is nothing left except to try and absorb it in every detail, to make it part of yourself and give it whatever you have to give, until you begin to wonder whether perhaps you wrote it, too. In short, the approach is through love; there is little hope any other way.

Those of us who helped to put on *Billy Budd* had little leisure to assess it from an æsthetic angle. Its impact on us was more in the nature of an earth tremor, and we simply went to our action stations. Whatever may be said when there is time for cool reflection, it will remain a most extraordinary characteristic of this score that it seemed to take possession of everybody's mind, and that we all, singers, players, music and stage staff alike, were unanimous in feeling that the work demanded and deserved our best, and that it provided everyone with new and exciting opportunities. We did not pause to consider whether we

liked *Billy Budd*; we certainly loved it; I have loved it so much that at times I almost began to hate it—the difference can be surprisingly small.

Now that the first excitement is over, we may ask ourselves what made us feel as we did, and of course the answers will vary. To me the two outstanding qualities of the *Budd* score are the way Britten sets the words and the way he suggests the sea; his inspiration seems to me unceasingly renewed by one or the other source. The first cursory glance at the score shows how much the music is created out of the words, not only out of their meaning in connexion with the story, but out of all their properties, their rhythm, their colour, out of the second thoughts they provoke, out of all their declamatory possibilities, until the fascination of the word leads to a kind of rhapsodical madness, with a strange theatrical effect of its own. Billy himself has a delight in playing with words as one of his most prominent characteristics. When, after his first stammer, he succeeds in saying that he is a foundling, the word 'foundling' seems to get hold of him and lure him into a florid excursion no longer connected with the story of his life. When he tells Dansker of the Novice's attempt to make him mutiny, he seems to like the sound of that word, too, and calls it out three times with growing emphasis. Even when he is in real trouble, as in the scene of the drumhead court, he ends his defence by exclaiming three times: 'It's a lie!' in varying pitch and dynamics, and, as if finally holding up the word for inspection and considering it appropriate for his purpose, he softly adds: 'A lie!' The approach of his certain death makes no difference either; in the gun bay scene he tells Dansker about the visit of the Chaplain who spoke to him 'of the good boy hung for the likes of me', and repeats 'the likes of me' on a little coloratura, as if savouring all the latent possibilities of the word 'likes'. And when he is left alone to say farewell 'to this grand rough world', his last sentence contains two more instances of his little mania, most moving at this extreme moment, as he protests that he will stay strong, adding, 'and that's all, all, all', like a bell tolling, and ending with 'and that's enough, that's enough, (doubly slow:) that's—e—nough'.

Captain Vere, as if to symbolize his understanding of Budd, has a similar tendency, although it is less naïve and more meditative and poetical. The result is that when he reiterates a word or a phrase, the effect is more obviously musical. For instance, in his exclamation half-way through the Prologue, 'O what have I done? O what, what have I done?', the second 'what' is as much needed to give the musical phrase the required length as to appreciate all that the word 'what' embraces. A few bars later 'the infinite sea' comes twice with similar effect, adding a feeling of vastness and of being lost on the water. But occasionally Vere, too, seems to be arrested by the properties of one single word. In his speech at the end of Act I, when he tells the crew that they are sailing into action and meeting their dangers alone, the word 'alone' stands out from the rest, twice accompanied on D sharp by the menacing sound of horns, only heard before when he mentioned France. He opens the Cabin Scene in Act III with 'Claggart, John Claggart, beware!', with obvious relish in the hammering rhythm of the name, ending with 'you shall fail', the word 'fail' twice in a florid manner, and a third time on the same notes as the word 'Claggart', as if to celebrate beforehand the result he expects when Claggart and Billy confront each other. His piece between the death of Claggart and the arrival of the Officers has more instances of getting intoxicated with words, notwithstanding the dramatic urgency of the moment: 'How can I condemn him? How can I save him? How? How?' The rising pitch suggests the growing emphasis and the intense searching of his heart, yet there is also the physical sound of the word 'how?' as an element, like that of the word 'broken' in the next sentence: 'My heart's broken, my life's broken, broken . . .', with the last 'broken' quickly added at the end of the bar, as if to illuminate in a more picturesque manner what the word really means, lest the statement should become a cliché. Then he adds, 'It is not his trial, it is mine', the word 'mine' occurring eight times on descending fourths, sinking into gruesome despair bordering on madness.

As might be expected, Claggart is less given to these imaginative excursions, except in the scene of his monologue in Act II, when for one moment he reveals himself as a tragic figure. While painfully going over the word 'handsome' again and again, with the evil



trombone sound at his heel, his eye turns inward, and for once we face the real Claggart. His words at the climax, 'So may it be!', are immediately echoed, more quickly and softly, as if he doubted them while he pronounced them, but at the end he doubly affirms: 'I will destroy you!', the second time with a marked emphasis on 'will'.

Throughout the opera there are instances of declaiming a phrase one way and repeating it with its accents changed. When Budd is impressed, Lieutenant Redburn remarks, 'This looks better' once with 'this' on the first beat, once after the beat, very lightly, so that the word 'better', on the second beat, stands out more prominently. Or when the Officers are informed of Claggart's death, Redburn, at the end of their nervous little 3/4 and 9/8 ensemble, exclaims, 'Sir, command us!', with 'Sir' on the first beat, and the second syllable of 'command' on the third; and again, 'Sir, command us!', more swiftly and subdued, with the phrase only occupying the second and third beats. A similar example may be found in the little monologue of the Novice in Act II, after Claggart's exit.

It seems to me that if an actor wanted to find a good way of delivering a speech, he ought to ask Britten to set it to music for him. Thus he would not only know where to raise or lower his voice, but also how to time every word or sentence, where to pause and what to emphasize. In *Billy Budd*, words and music seem to be one and the same thing, so much so that it appears futile to scrutinize them separately. Their oneness emerges as the composer's main achievement. As in chemistry, two elements have been fused to create a new one which is unlike either of them, having its own distinctive features. In short, this is an opera.

As for the sea, it is a hostile, green sea, stormy and cold and threatening; it also has grandeur. Vere talks of it in the Prologue, but its first real entry comes with the theme of the holy-stoning parties, which later on becomes the theme of the 'Rights of Man' and the rebellion. Like the sea itself, the theme comes back in waves, punctuating the scene and giving it a musical shape, developing towards a climax in which the orchestra carries it on while the stage is emptying. The voices off-stage frequently continue to sound their last notes, getting softer, and sometimes getting louder again, as if the wind were playing with the sound. Best of all, to me, is the first sea shanty theme ('Blow her away'), taken up by the orchestra as the curtain falls for the scene change in Act II and, after being interrupted by another song theme ('Over the water'), developing towards a glorious outburst in E flat when it rises again on the berthdeck with everyone singing away in a swaying 12/8 movement, and the wind playing with the sound of their voices, throwing stray chords from one key to another. Then there is the mist in Act III, with different groups of wind and brass instruments like pedals holding different chords outlined by pizzicato strings, so that their contrasting colours make us conscious of a variety of keys at the same time, forming a blanket of sound which obscures our vision, in every sense of the word, until the gay little D major fanfare announces a clear sky. And at the end of Act IV when, after the horrifying march with muffled drums and the execution of Budd, the rebellious men are ordered away, and abandon their seditious B natural to sing in the flat key of the Officers, the sea re-enters in the orchestra, taking over the old theme as in the beginning of Act I, submerging the voices, and finally receding into the Epilogue.

The experience of seeing this remarkable score come to life under our hands is still too recent for me to try and appraise its value or significance in relation to other works. Reflection will follow, as a matter of necessity, for a creative event of this importance holds up a mirror to us all, compelling us to take stock and think again. Meanwhile the exhilaration of having taken part in the launching of a new ship still lasts, and lights our days.

PETER GELLHORN.

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## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

**ROGER SESSIONS:** Born Brooklyn, New York, December 28, 1896. Graduate of Harvard University (1911-15) where he edited *The Harvard Musical Review*. Later studied under Horatio Parker at Yale. In 1917 began teaching career; in 1919 began studies with Ernest Bloch. Became assistant to Bloch at Cleveland Institute of Music, Cleveland, Ohio, 1921. In Europe 1925-33, where he successively held the Guggenheim Fellowship, Rome Prize, and the Carnegie Fellowship. Returned to the States and became Assistant Professor of Music at Princetown University, and is now Professor of Music at the University of California. Is spending 1951-52 in Italy, writing a full-length opera. Among his most important compositions are an opera in one act, *The Trial of Lucullus*, two symphonies, two piano sonatas, a violin concerto, and a string quartet. Has also written two books, *The Musical Experience* and *Harmonic Practice*.

**FRANK MARTIN:** One of the foremost living composers. Born Geneva, September 15, 1890. Pianist, harpsichordist, teacher of composition at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Cologne. His most celebrated works are the two oratorios, *Le Vin Herbé* and *Golgotha*, and the *Petite symphonie concertante* for harp, harpsichord, piano and double string orchestra. His new *Violin Concerto*, played for the first time in January, 1952, at Basle, will have performances this summer at the Holland and Edinburgh festivals, with Szigeti as soloist. The article by Frank Martin in this issue is reprinted from *Polyphonie*.

**PIERRE BOULEZ:** Young French composer and critic; born 1925.

**ROBERTO GERHARD:** Composer, born 1896 in Catalonia. Studied with Felipe Pedrell and Arnold Schönberg. After the Spanish Civil War he settled in this country in 1939. Works written since then: ballets *Don Quixote*, *Alegrias*, *Pandora*, symphony *Homenaje a Pedrell*, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra*, *Concerto for Piano and String Orchestra*, *Capriche* for flute solo, *Sonata* for viola and piano, *Impromptus* for piano, *The Duenna*, a comic opera; also incidental music for Linklater's radio adaptation of Cervantes' novel *Adventures of Don Quixote*, and for Stratford productions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Cymbeline*.

**FRED GOLDBECK:** Born at The Hague, February 13, 1902. Nevertheless, prefers to live in Paris. Writes about music; nevertheless, prefers to read scores, and books not about music. Goes to concerts; nevertheless, prefers not to go nine times out of ten. Conducts; nevertheless, prefers to dispense with conducting rather than conduct without rehearsing. Partial to the harmless, necessary twelve-tone composer; nevertheless, prefers cats.

**KARL RANKL:** Born October 1, 1898, at Gaaden near Vienna. Pupil of Arnold Schönberg from 1917 to 1922 and remained an intimate friend of Schönberg all his life. Started conductor's career at the Vienna *Volksoper* in 1922. Worked with Otto Klemperer at the *Staatsoper am Platz der Republik* (Berlin). Director of Opera at Wiesbaden. Left Germany in 1933, although non-Jewish, as protest against Naziism. Director of Opera at the *Deutsches Landestheater* (Prague). Emigrated 1939 to England; became guest-conductor of the L.P.O., L.S.O., B.B.C., etc., during the war. 1946-1951, Musical Director of Covent Garden Opera Company. Compositions: three symphonies; an opera, *Deirdre of the Sorrows* (based on J. M. Synge's play); chamber music and many songs.

**HERBERT MURRILL:** Head of Music, B.B.C. Born May 1, 1909. Educated Haberdasher's Aske's School, R.A.M., and Worcester College, Oxford. Director of Music for the Group Theatre Season at Westminster Theatre, 1935-36. Joined B.B.C. Music Department, 1936. Works published: Three Hornpipes (for orchestra) 1932; String Quartet, 1939; Concerto No. 2 for 'cello and orchestra, 1950; many smaller works for strings, pianoforte, etc.

**ANNA MAHLER:** Daughter of Gustav Mahler. The head of Schönberg reproduced in this issue has recently been bought by the Library of Congress in Washington.

(Notes on the remaining contributors have already appeared in previous issues of THE SCORE.)

Ralph Kirkpatrick's article, printed in the last two issues, is part of a chapter from his book on Scarlatti to be published next year.

The photograph of Schönberg and von Zemlinsky in Prague is reproduced by permission of Karl Rankl.



